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THE YOUNGER SISTER.

A Novel

BY

MRS. HUBBACK,

IN THREE VOLUMES.—VOL. I.

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TO THE MEMORY OF HER AUNT,
THE LATE JANE AUSTEN;

THIS WORK IS AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED
BY THE AUTHORESS
WHO, THOUGH TOO YOUNG TO HAVE KNOWN
HER PERSONALLY,
WAS FROM CHILDHOOD TAUGHT TO
ESTEEM HER VIRTUES,
AND ADMIRE HER TALENTS.

Aberystwith

Feb. 1850.

THE YOUNGER SISTER.

CHAPTER I.

THE Reverend John Watson, who, for the space of twenty years, was the incumbent of the village of Winston, had not always been such an indolent invalid as he appeared to those who only knew him during the last ten years of that time. When he was inducted into the living, he was a husband and the father of five children; a sixth was very shortly added to their nursery; and, for several years after her birth, Mrs. Wat-

son's activity, good judgment, and influence with her husband, preserved, for him, the esteem and respect of his parishioners, and the character amongst his acquaintance, of a very kind and attentive neighbour, and a most highly respectable parish priest. But, with her life, his energy seemed to depart; he became indolent from sorrow; shunning society—shrinking from exertion—and confining himself to what was absolutely unavoidable of his duties. This line of conduct, begun from grief, which seemed to prostrate his mental strength, was continued from self-indulgence, long after the poignancy of the grief was worn away, and it ended in really entailing the ill-health— from which, he had, for sometime, pleased himself with fancying that he suffered. Frequent attacks of the gout, disabled him from much exertion, and often confined him to his room for weeks together.

In the meantime, his family grew up with almost every disadvantage that could attend them. Motherless, and unchecked by their

father, his girls—at least, the three eldest—were left entirely to their own guidance and discretion, or indiscretion, to speak with more propriety; and the sons were early sent out, to fight their own way in the world, without the softening influence of domestic ties, or the memory of a happy home to warm their hearts and strengthen their principles.

The only one of the family who could be said to have received a good education, was the youngest daughter, Emma—who, on her mother's death, was begged of her father by his brother-in-law, and brought up by him and his wife, as tenderly as if she had been their own. He was a wealthy man; and by her own family, when they thought of her at all, she was generally considered with something like envy—excepting by her eldest sister, who had been too fond of her as an infant, not to rejoice in her removal to a better home. It was considered as indisputable by the others, that she was uncommonly lucky; since, be-

yond doubt, her uncle would leave her handsomely provided for; and the only question on that subject, which was debated with much anxiety, was, whether he ought not to divide his wealth equally amongst them all, or whether the eldest son should inherit the greatest share. Mr. Robert Watson, the expectant nephew, was an attorney at Croydon and his flourishing business, joined to his great expectations from his rich uncle, had proved overpowering attractions to a young lady in that neighbourhood, to whom he had been united for several years, when the death of his uncle occurred. Had the greedy anticipations of the nephew, or the selfish hopes of his vain wife, been the only disappointed feelings on the occasion, nobody, but themselves, would have much cared. But Mr. Pearson, in his will, trusting much more to the steadiness of his wife, and less to the affection of his niece, than either deserved, left the whole of his property in the widow's power. He intended, perhaps, by this measure, to se-

cure to her the respect and attention of his sister's children, whose interest it thus became to keep on good terms with their aunt; and was very far from anticipating the catastrophe that ensued. Instead of acting the part of an indulgent aunt, or of a patronising and tyrannical one, Mrs. Pearson took an active part to obliterate all trace of the connection, by bestowing her hand, and her first husband's property, on a handsome but poor young Irishman; and, on her shortly after quitting England, to visit his relatives, she kindly gave Emma leave to return to her father's house, with a generous present of fifty pounds to be divided between her and her sisters.

At the period of her return home, Emma found her two younger sisters were absent; and the affectionate warmth with which Elizabeth Watson received her, joined to the silence of her father on the mortifying subject of her aunt's marriage, did great good to her heart and feelings. The painful sensations which the union in question

had occasioned her, were quite as strong as the indignation, and far more amiable than the disappointment, which had been experienced by other members of her family. She had loved and revered her uncle, and would not, even to herself, admit that he had been unjust, hardly even injudicious in the disposition of his property. But she had, also, loved her aunt; and the memory of old obligations, and gratitude for long-continued kindness, struggled painfully with less agreeable feelings. So far as her own loss of fortune was concerned, she did not consider it worth a regret: having been early accustomed to the luxuries of a handsome income, she had not the smallest practical knowledge of what poverty is; and, therefore, with the generous indifference natural to an amiable and liberal mind, she would have felt no resentment, had this been the only evil attending the marriage. But the fear that her aunt was bringing unhappiness on herself, by her injudicious choice; the cer-

tainty that she was rendering herself an object of contempt or ridicule; and the disappointment to her own affectionate heart in being thus cast off for a stranger, though each bitter in itself, were altogether easy to bear, compared with the glaring disrespect to her beloved uncle's memory, which these hasty nuptials testified. This cut her to the heart; and perhaps it was the silent reproach which her looks conveyed that made Mrs. Mac Mahon so very desirous that Emma should cultivate an acquaintance with her own family, from whom she had been too long separated. With the strong feelings of a warm and youthful mind, not yet versed in the fleeting nature of every human woe, she deemed this a grief which time might soften, but could never quite heal; and though rejoicing at the prospect of meeting with her sisters, and cultivating an unremitting and unfading affection for them, she was convinced that she never should quite get

over the disappointment her aunt had caused her.

The Christmas assembly was fast approaching, and Mrs. Edwards had, as usual, invited one of the Miss Watsons to accompany her family to the ball. The absence of Penelope and Margaret prevented there being any indecision as to which should be the fortunate individual. Mr. Watson could not be left quite alone, and Emma having never been to a ball, Elizabeth, without hesitation, decided in her favour.

For the first day or two that it was in contemplation, Emma, true to her pre-arranged hopeless despondency, took little interest in the prospect; and though strongly feeling her sister's good nature, and, for her sake, trying to seem pleased, would really have given up her place without a sigh, to any individual who desired it. But the interest of preparing her frock, arranging her ornaments, and settling the minute details of the toilette,

had the same irresistible attraction for her, that they would have for nine girls out of ten, and when the important afternoon arrived, she was in a very pleasant state of excitement on the subject.

“You will find the Edwardses very agreeable people,” said Elizabeth to her, as they drove slowly from the parsonage along the lane, now splashy and deep with November mud. “I assure you, they live in very good style; the door will be opened by a man-servant, and their dinner is sure to be handsome.”

“What sort of person is Mr. Edwards?” enquired Emma, who began to have a little palpitation, at the idea of being left quite amongst strangers.

“Oh, you need not mind him,” said her sister, “you will see him at dinner, and he will ask you to take wine; and he will eat a great many filberts after dinner, and offer you some gingerbread; but you need not take it if you don’t like; Mary Edwards makes it on purpose for her father, who eats

it every day. Mr. Edwards will play at cards all the evening at the ball, and if he wins you will stay late, and he will be quite good tempered; but if he has ill-luck, he will hurry you home very early. However you will be sure of some comfortable soup afterwards; and if he is cross, you had better say nothing, and go to bed as soon aa you can!"

"I will be sure and remember it," observed Emma.

"As the party from Osborne Castle are expected," continued Elizabeth, "I dare say it will be a very good ball; I am sure you will be very much admired; how I should like to be there myself!"

"Well, Elizabeth, I am sure you shall go instead of me; it would be much better, as *you* know everybody, and *I* am quite a stranger. I could send John over with your things if you staid in my place; I should not be at all afraid of driving this steady old thing back to Winston by myself; and as to our father, I dare say I could

amuse him. Do you know I really think you had better settle it so."

"My dearest Emma," cried Elizabeth warmly, "how excessively good-natured of you; but I could not do such a thing for the world, though I shall always remember your making the offer. Keep you from your first ball indeed; when you are so sure of being so much admired! oh no, it is only fit that you should have your turn of pleasure, and I would not hinder you."

"But indeed, dear Elizabeth, I should not care about it, I am sure, in comparison with you, so you need not mind that!"

"But indeed I could not think of such a thing; and besides, my principal wish would be to see *you* there. I am sure you will enjoy it. Offer to give up a ball at nineteen, and your first ball too; I wonder when Pen or Margaret would think of such a thing: I am sure *I* should never have forgiven any one who kept *me* from a ball at your age. But if my father seems pretty well, and can spare me, I really think I

would wrap myself up, and make John drive me over to join you there ; I could easily do that you know.’

“What! drive over in this pony-chaise, Elizabeth?” said Emma, much surprised.

“Yes, why not! I suppose *you* have been so used to a coach, as to think that impossible : but, my dear Emma, I am afraid you are too refined to be happy with us!”

“Too refined!” said Emma, what do you mean?”

“Why that is just an example,—you are not used to make shifts, and be put about ; and are shocked at such an idea ; it will not answer, I assure you, it will not make you happy.”

“I am sorry you see anything to find fault with, Elizabeth ; I did not know I was refined ; it is natural to me ; I only think and feel like the people I have been used to,” and she sighed at the thought of her uncle and aunt.

“I dare say that is very true ; but it will not do here ; how Pen would laugh at you ;

you have no idea how she ridicules everything not just like herself. So you had better get over it as fast as you can!"

"I will do my best," sighed Emma.

"I should not wonder if Tom Musgrove were to dance with you, he generally notices every new girl, especially if they are pretty. But I should not like *you* to be caught by him"

"Who is he? I never heard you mention him."

"Oh, he is a young man of independent property who lives near here; and one of our pleasantest young men too; but I must warn you against him, Emma; he has a way of paying attentions to young girls, and he is so pleasant they all like him; so when he has made one desperately in love, he flies off to somebody else, and does not mind what hearts he breaks."

"What a despicable character," cried Emma warmly, "you need not fear my liking him after that."

"I assure you," returned Miss Watson,

“he is *very* agreeable, and I defy any girl to whom he tries to recommend himself, not to find him agreeable. Almost every girl in this neighbourhood except myself, has been desperately in love with him at one time or other. Margaret was his last object, but though he has not paid her much attention for these six months, she is perfectly persuaded that he is as much attached to her as she is to him; and this is the second time since last spring that she has gone to stay a month at Croydon, in the hopes of his following and proposing to her. He never will however.”

“And how came you to escape?” enquired Emma with interest.

“Really I can hardly tell; I think at first I was so taken up with the affair with Purvis, and my disappointment there, that I thought little about Tom Musgrove.

“To whom do you allude?” said Emma, “I do not at all understand you?”

“Did you never hear about that!” said Elizabeth with surprise, “perhaps you were

thought too young to be trusted; but I will tell you now. I was engaged to him; he was a very nice young man, and it would have been a very good match for me—and what do you think prevented it?”

“I am anxious to know, Elizabeth, but cannot guess!”

“It was Penelope—yes, it was really Pen, she said; and did things which caused the rupture—and Purvis left me!”

Emma looked much shocked.

“I can hardly believe it: your own sister; it seems quite impossible that any girl could be guilty of such treachery: what could be her motive!”

“Oh, she wanted to marry him herself—Pen would do anything in the world to be married—that is what she is gone to Chichester about now—did you not know that?”

“Gone about?” repeated Emma looking puzzled—“what do you mean, how can she be gone to be married?”

“Don’t you know that,” again exclaimed

Elizabeth, "though, to be sure, I do not see how you should, as nobody could have told you. I believe there is some old doctor there whom she is bent upon marrying. He is quite an old man, asthmatic, and all sorts of bad things: the friend she is staying with, however, thinks it would be a very good match for her, as he would make her a handsome settlement, and could not live long. I am not at all in her confidence, however, and have only a general notion of how things go on; I just hear what she tells Margaret, or what she lets out accidentally. I believe they think everything going on very prosperously now, and, perhaps, she may soon be married to him. I am sure I hope she will."

"Oh, Elizabeth, do you think she could be happy with an old asthmatic man? and marrying from such mercenary motives," cried Emma, half horrified.

"Really I do not know, replied Miss Watson quietly, "whether *she* would be happier or not; but I am sure *we* should.

I wish with all my heart Pen and Margaret both were married ; for Margaret is so peevish, there is no peace unless one lets her have her own way ; and Penelope would rather have quarrelling going on than nothing. Now I think you and I could live together very comfortably, Emma ; and really I would rather the others were married than myself."

"Yes, I can easily believe that," returned Emma, "having once loved, and been disappointed, I can understand your not caring about any one else."

"I do not know that *that* would make any difference," returned Miss Watson. "Poor Purvis, I certainly was very sorry to lose him ; and really suffered very much at the time ; but it would be a very pleasant thing to be well married ; and, I believe, scarce any body marries their first love."

"I would rather do anything than marry for money," observed Emma, "it is so

shocking. I would rather be teacher at a boarding school."

"I have been at school, Emma, which you have not, and know what a school teacher is—such a life—I would rather do anything than that!"

"But to marry without love—that must surely be worse," persisted Emma.

"Oh, I would not marry without love, exactly; but I think I could easily love any tolerably good-tempered man, who could give me a comfortable home. I am sure I would make any body a good wife; unless they were very cross. But your idea of *loving* is just another of your refinements, Emma; and only does for rich people who can afford such luxuries."

Emma did not reply; but presently said—

"I think there is only one Miss Edwards, you told me."

"Oh yes, Mary Edwards is the only daughter; and I wish you particularly to observe who she dances with; whether she

is much with the officers, especially if Captain Hunter is very attentive to her. I must write to Sam soon, and he will be anxious to hear—”

“Why should he care?” enquired Emma.

“Because, poor fellow, he is very much in love with her himself—and he begged me to watch for him, and let him know what chance he has—I must say, I do not think he has any at all; and even if Mary liked him, her father, and certainly her mother, would not encourage it. If Sam were set up for himself even, as an apothecary, I do not know that they would let her think of him; but being merely an assistant to a country doctor, I am sure he ought to have no hopes.”

“Poor fellow,” said Emma, “you think he loves her, do you?”

“Oh yes, I have no doubt of *his* love being very strong; he is always writing about her, and, when he comes home, try-

ing to see her: however, he says now, he does not mean to see her again, unless he gets some decided encouragement; or else he might have tried to come here and meet her at this ball: he will not ask for a day at Christmas, unless I send him a good account."

"Well, I will be sure to observe," replied Emma.

No more conversation could pass between the sisters, as they had reached the outskirts of the town; and the noise of the carriage wheels on the rough pitching of the street, made all attempts to be heard quite fruitless. Elizabeth whipped and urged on the old horse into something like an animated trot, and they soon were threading their way between the carts of cabbages, and turnips—waggons of hay—stalls of cattle, and sheep—old women with baskets—young women with fine gowns—boors with open mouths, and idle boys and girls with mischievous fingers

congregating in the untidy market-place of a small country town. Having successfully crossed these, and escaped without accident, though not without some apprehension on Emma's part, they proceeded along the High Street in safety, until the house of Mr. Edwards was reached. Elizabeth certainly expected Emma to be somewhat impressed with the grandeur of this, the principal residence of the town; but the bright red-brick house created no peculiar sensation in her mind, though she saw it was one story higher than the neighbouring buildings. The dark green door, glittering brass knocker, and snow white steps, were likewise considered by Emma as things of course, being unaware that they testified to the wealth and taste of the proprietor, and when their knock was answered by a footman in livery, as Elizabeth had foretold, she was yet so entirely ignorant as to regard him without emotion, or entertain any feeling of extra respect for his master.

They found Mrs. and Miss Edwards sitting together—the father, of course, was at his office and not likely to appear till dinner time. Mary Edwards was a pleasing looking girl, though the curl papers, which were a part of her preparation for the evening, did not improve her appearance. Her manner was rather reserved, but less so than that her mother—whose formal stiffness was so great, that Emma almost fancied herself an unwelcome guest; and felt so uncomfortable and frightened, as to be more than half inclined to accompany Elizabeth home again. When, after sitting a short time, the latter rose to depart, leaving her sister with a sinking heart, Mrs. Edwards tried to be agreeable, enquired how Emma liked their country—whether she walked much—and if she usually enjoyed good health—to all which questions, Emma returned answers as coherent and intelligible as could be expected from a person whose thoughts were fixed on another subject. Her mind was involved in a labyrinth of won-

der, as to the reason why Mrs. Edwards had so far punished herself as to have invited one to whom she seemed so very unfriendly.

After half an hour of this unpleasant intercourse, the ladies went up stairs to dress; and as the two girls were now together, without the mother's cold looks to distress them, they soon became more easy and intimate. The little cares of the toilette—the assistance they mutually afforded each other—the interest thereby raised, quickly dispersed the apparent coldness of Mary Edwards' manner; and she even ventured to observe to Emma, that she thought her like her brother. It was easy to guess which brother she meant, and Emma did not force her to particularise; but as Miss Edwards turned away directly after uttering this, and bent over a drawer to search for something, which she never found, it was impossible to decide as to the degree of her blushing; but Emma thought, at the moment, her companion looked so very pretty

and lady-like in her ball-dress, that she felt no surprise at her brother's predilection.

Mr. Edwards joined them at dinner ; and, whilst he was helping the soup, he repeated the observation, which his daughter had previously and privately made, that Miss Emma Watson was very like her brother.

Mrs. Edwards coolly replied she did not see it.

“ We are very well acquainted with your brother, Mr. Sam,” resumed Mr. Edwards, “ He usually dines with us, when he is at home.”

Emma did not know exactly what to answer, but Mrs. Edwards took up the subject in her peculiarly cold manner, and observed :

“ It is, now, many months since *we* have seen anything of Mr. Sam Watson—though, I believe, he did dine with you, Mr. Edwards, whilst *we* were at Bath, last year.”

Mary's cheeks became of a decidedly deeper shade of pink during this discourse, but she ate her soup without speaking.

"I hope he was well, when you heard of him last," persisted Mr. Edwards, seeming, in a very husband-like way, bent on continuing the conversation which his wife desired to stop.

"I do not think my sister has heard, since I have been at Winston," replied Emma.

"Young men in business, have not much time for idle correspondence," observed the elder lady, so much as if she thought Miss Watson *ought* not to have received a letter, that Emma ventured to observe she supposed that was the reason.

Mr. Edwards did not, any further, provoke his wife by persevering on this subject, and the rest of the dinner passed calmly and uneventfully away.

Mrs. Edwards, anxious to secure a comfortable seat by the fire, was determined to be, as usual, very early in the ball room—

and her husband was roused from his after-dinner nap, to accompany them—which he unwillingly did; after settling his cravat and arranging his wig at the glass, which surmounted the drawing-room chimney-piece. The coach conveyed them very safely to the assembly rooms in the Red Lion; and as they were mounting the stairs in the dark, for they were so early that the lamp in the lobby was not lighted, the door of a bed-room was suddenly opened, and a young man appeared in dishabille.

“Ha! Mrs. Edwards!” said he, “early, as usual! you always take care to be the first in the field. When you come, I know it is time for me to dine; but I think I must dress first—don’t you think so?”

Mrs. Edwards replied by begging they might not interrupt him in so necessary an occupation; and, with a formal bow, passed on—looking round anxiously to see whether her two young charges were following.

“Do you know him?” whispered Mary.

“No,” replied Emma, in the same tone.

“It is Tom Musgrove,” said Miss Edwards, a little louder, as they advanced further from the vicinity of his apartment.

“*Mr.* Musgrove,” said her mother, with a peculiar emphasis.

Mary blushed and was silent.

CHAPTER II.

THEY entered the ball-room; it looked very cold and very dull; the candles as yet hardly lighted, and the fires yielding far more smoke than heat. Over one of these several officers were lounging; Mrs. Edwards directed her steps to the other, and seated herself on the warmest side; her two companions found chairs near her, Mr. Edwards having left them at the door of the ball-room, to seek out his old associates at

the whist-tables. But it was all so new to Emma, that she did not feel any of the annoyance at their early appearance with which a more experienced young lady would have been afflicted. Everything interested her happy mind, and she even felt amused in ascertaining the number of lights, and listening to the scraping of the fiddles tuning in the orchestra. They had not been seated many minutes, when they were joined by a young officer, whom Emma immediately guessed to be Captain Hunter, and from the pleasure which the quiet Mary demonstrated at his addresses, she augured unfavourably for her brother's prospects.

She could not, however, accuse Mrs. Edwards of looking more kindly on the gay soldier than she seemed to do on the doctor's assistant: and had it been Sam himself, he could hardly have received a more frigid recognition than the formal and ungracious bow, which Emma witnessed.

Captain Hunter showed no symptom of discouragement, but continued a low but eloquent conversation with Mary, the only part of which intelligible to her companions was an engagement for the first two dances ; for these were the days of country dances, before quadrilles, waltzes, and polkas had changed the face of the ball-room. There must certainly be some connexion between the style of dress and the style of dancing prevalent in any particular generation. The stiff ruffs, the awful long waists and formal boddices of Elizabeth's reign were quite in keeping with a stately pavin; the loose attire and complete undress adopted by the courtly beauties of Charles the Second may be considered characteristic of the elegant but licentious style pervading their dances. The minuet matched well with the buckram, and rich brocade, and high head-dress which marked the era of the earlier Georges ; whilst powder and hoops of course disappeared under the influ-

ence of the merry country-dance and cotillion. Perhaps at the present time the dresses, like the dances, partake more of the character of the latter Stuarts—graceful and bewitching ; the habiliments full and flowing, the steps vivacious but tending to giddiness, with a near approximation to romping, and a great risk of inducing a *joux-pas*, or even a serious fall.

But all this is a digression from my story, and cannot possibly have passed through my heroine's mind, since, sixty years ago, the liveliest fancy would have never pictured an English ball such as we now see it. The accessions to the company at first few and at great intervals, so as to allow Emma time to notice the dress, manners, and appearance of each individual, gradually became so much more numerous, as to prevent her seeing or observing more than half of them. Dancing, however, was delayed because the Osborne Castle party were expected, and the stewards, of course, were waiting for Miss Osborne to open the ball.

At length, a bustle in the assembly-room called Emma's attention to the door, from a very remarkable dress which she had been for some minutes contemplating, and the important group made their appearance. Mary pointed them out to her young companion: there was Lady Osborne, with her splendid diamond necklace; her son and daughter, and her daughter's friend, Miss Carr; her son's late tutor, Mr Howard, his sister, and her little boy, a child apparently about six years old. The last mentioned lady, a widow with pleasing manners and a very agreeable countenance, happened to seat herself near Emma, whose attention was speedily called to the little boy, by the extreme impatience he evinced for the dance to begin. His mother, turning to a friend beside her, observed,

“ You will not wonder that Charles is so eager for his first dance, when you hear how he is to be honoured; Miss Osborne has promised to dance with him herself, which is very good-natured.”

“Oh yes,” cried Charles, “she has promised to be my partner ever since Saturday, indeed as long as I knew I was coming to the ball.”

Just at this moment, Miss Osborne stepped hastily forward, and addressing the little boy in a hurried manner, said :

“Charles, I am very sorry, but I find I cannot keep my engagement with you this time; I must dance with Colonel Miller, but another time, the next dance, perhaps, will do just as well for us I dare say.”

She then hastened away, without waiting to witness the effect of her communication on the little fellow, whose hopes and enjoyment seemed to vanish together. Disappointment was painted on every feature, and his swelling heart appeared about to prompt a shower of tears, with which a proud desire to appear manly was maintaining an ineffectual struggle. His mother, who seemed little less distressed, endeavoured to soothe his grief, and held out vague hopes of better luck another time; when

Emma, who really pitied him, and was quite interested by the appearance of both, said with the most obliging air:

“If you will accept me as a substitute for Miss Osborne, sir, I shall be most happy to dance with you the two next dances.”

It would be difficult to tell, of the mother or son, which countenance looked the brightest, or whose eyes showed the greatest pleasure at this kind offer: and the couple took their place in the dance with equal satisfaction, Emma being perfectly contented with her juvenile partner, whilst he was all anxiety to acquit himself well to do her honor, and especially intent on running his fingers as far as possible into the points of the new gloves which he had received from his mother on quitting her side, with sundry injunctions to keep them on.

Emma had been much amused when the Osborne party entered, to see Tom Musgrove accompanying them; having, no doubt, from the knowledge she had pre-

viously acquired, of his having been long in the house, that he had been waiting outside the door, in order to join them, and appear as if he formed one of their party. She now discerned him standing opposite to herself by the side of Lord Osborne; who, she learnt from casual remarks amongst ladies near her, never danced himself, and was now preventing or dissuading Tom Musgrove from doing so either. Lord Osborne was a remarkably plain young man, barely endowed with the air of a gentleman, and it seemed to observers, as if the time spent in the ball-room were one of actual penance to him. His principal occupation appeared to consist in regarding Emma with a broad, unmitigated stare, which rather disconcerted her, and made her exert herself to converse with Charles, that she might not seem to mind it. It was not easy for her to decide what drew his attention so fixedly on herself; she thought, perhaps, that he wondered at her presumption in standing up

with one of his party ; or that he was criticising her style of dress ; or censuring her dancing ; she wished with all her heart that he could find some other subject for his speculation, and was quite relieved at the gradual change of place which dancing produced. Charles was very happy, and spoke his feelings in rather an audible whisper, when addressing Mr. Howard, as that gentleman was passing near him, he said :

“ Oh, do look, Uncle Howard, at my pretty partner, I do really think she is the prettiest girl in the room,” an opinion which Mr. Howard himself did not seem inclined to controvert, though his answer was more cautiously and softly given.

“ Upon my word, Charles,” said Miss Osborne, as she gave him hands across ; “ you are in high luck ; I am sure you have gained by the exchange,” an assertion to which, had Charles been a few years older, he would have replied with less sincerity than his hurried “ Yes,” now announced.

He told Emma he was very glad *now*,

that Miss Osborne had broken her promise, but could not help anxiously enquiring whether she thought she would keep her engagement for the next dance.

Emma answered in the affirmative, though she could have given no better reason for expecting Miss Osborne to perform her promise next time, than that she had broken it the last. When the dance was concluded, and Emma returned to her seat, Mrs. Wells, Charles' mother, expressed in warm terms, her obligation to Miss Watson for so kindly dancing with her little boy; Emma assured her, with great sincerity, that she was very happy to have given him pleasure, and that she had greatly enjoyed her dance.

They soon entered into an agreeable conversation—and she was exceedingly pleased, when, a short time afterwards, they were joined by Mr. Howard, who begged his sister to introduce him, and solicited her hand for the ensuing dance. Mr. Howard's appearance and manner were such, as could

not fail to prepossess any one in his favor, and Emma had formed a favorable opinion of him already, from the affectionate terms in which little Charles had spoken of his uncle, when he informed her that he and his mother resided constantly with him. The good nature which had actuated her brought its own reward ; and she thought, with much pleasure, of the ensuing dances. Previous to their commencement, there was a proposal made by Mrs. Wells, that they should go in search of tea. They set off accordingly—Charles very proudly escorting his partner—Mr. Howard and his sister being close behind ; when, in attempting to enter the tea-room, they were met by so many returning to the dancing, that they were forced to draw aside ; and, almost pushed behind a half-opened door. Whilst waiting here for a passage, Emma heard Lord Osborne address Mr. Tom Musgrove, as they were standing together before the very door which concealed her.

“ I say, Musgrove, why don't you go and

dance with that beautiful Emma Watson that I may come and look at her?"

"I was just going to ask her, my lord:" cried Tom, "the very thought that I had in my head this moment."

"Ay, do so, then," continued Lord Osborne, "and I will stand behind you; by Jove, she's so handsome that, if ever I did dance with any girl, it should be with her!"

It was with no little self-congratulation, that Emma reflected on her engagement to Mr. Howard, which would save her, as she hoped, from the unwelcome suit of Mr. Musgrove and the stare of Lord Osborne. There was a sort of suppressed look of mirth and amusement on the countenance of Mr. Howard, which convinced her that *he*, too, had heard this short dialogue, and Charles evinced his perception of it by whispering:

"They did not know we could hear them—and I would not have told them for the

world—would you?" A sentiment in which Emma silently, but entirely joined.

It was not till they left the room—and she had joined Mrs. Edwards—that they again encountered Mr. Musgrove. He immediately requested an introduction, and Mrs. Edwards was obliged to comply ; but, it was in her coldest and most ungracious manner. It evidently made not the slightest difference to the gentleman, however, who heeded not the means to gain a wished-for end, and had long been aware that he was no favorite with the Edwards' family generally. He immediately flattered himself he should be permitted the great honor of dancing with Miss Emma Watson the two next dances. She had peculiar satisfaction in replying that she was engaged.

"Oh! but, indeed," he eagerly replied, "we must not let my little friend, Charles, engross you entirely, Miss Emma?"

To which, with a demure face, and an internal sensation of delight, she answered that she was not engaged to dance with Master Wells.

Tom was baffled and mortified, and he shewed it in his face. He lingered, however, near her, until her partner appeared to claim her hand; when, with a look of surprise, he went to inform Lord Osborne of his ill-success.

The young nobleman bore it with great philosophy.

“Oh, with Howard is it!” was his observation; “well, that will do just as well for me.”

And accordingly he stationed himself exactly behind that gentleman, and again indulged in the stare which Emma had previously found so annoying. She wished with all her heart that he could find a less disagreeable way of expressing his admiration, as even the idea that he thought her so handsome could not reconcile her to his method of demonstrating it. However, she found Mr. Howard quite as agreeable as his countenance had led her to expect, and upon the whole she enjoyed herself exceedingly. When the dance had concluded,

whilst she was still engaged in a pleasant conversation with her partner, they were suddenly interrupted by discovering that the Osborne Castle party were preparing to leave. She heard Lord Osborne telling Tom Musgrove that the thing had become very dull to the ladies, and his mother was determined to go home: though for his own part, he thought it was the best ball he had been at for a long time. Mrs. Wells and her brother of course accompanied the others, and Emma wished them good night, and saw them depart with regret, in which they appeared to participate. Lord Osborne entered, after quitting the room for a minute or two, as if reluctant to tear himself away, and disturbing her from the corner where she was resting, muttered an inaudible excuse of having left his gloves in the window-seat behind her; though the said gloves being carefully coiled up in his hand all the time, it was certain that he must have had some other

object in view, which probably was to enjoy one more stare at her.

Tom Musgrove disappeared at the same time from the ball-room, as he would not be guilty of the vulgarity of outstaying the grandest part of the company ; whether he spent the rest of the evening in helping Mrs. Newland make negus at the bar, or consoled himself by ordering a barrel of oysters and whisky-punch in his own room, Emma never ascertained, but her partner, who laughed excessively at his airs of elegance, assured her he had no doubt it was great mortification and self-denial on his part to appear indifferent, and she was too little pleased with him to avoid feeling a secret satisfaction at this conviction.

The rest of the assembly lost nothing in spirit by their departure, and seemed determined to enjoy themselves, though Miss Osborne had pronounced the evening dull, and her friend Miss Carr was heard to declare, after surveying every one through

her glass, that it all seemed very vulgar.

Emma's next partner was an officer, but she had several other solicitations which she was forced to refuse, as a very pretty girl, quite new, and evidently admired by Lord Osborne, was not likely to be neglected in a country assembly-room, and for the rest of the evening it was quite the fashion to call her "*the pretty Miss Watson.*"

As it was a regulation in the ball-room that no other dance should be called after one o'clock, this finished her amusement; and at the summons of Mr. Edwards she was not at all dissatisfied to return home, although she professed to have spent a most delightful evening. She felt rather anxious to ascertain whether Mr. Edwards had lost or won at cards, and on entering the dining-room, where the supper-table was spread, she looked anxiously at his countenance, to read his features, and discover his state of mind. The pleasant conviction

that fortune had favoured him was conveyed to her mind, when, on the subsidence of the frown which the sudden glare of candle-light occasioned, he presented a bland smile and self-satisfied aspect, pronounced the soup which, as Elizabeth had predicted, appeared to comfort them, to be extremely good, and joked with Emma about the hearts which he guessed she had conquered on this her first appearance in their country.

“Well, Mary,” added he, turning to his daughter, and chucking her under the chin, “and who did you dance with? Who was your first partner?”

“Captain Hunter, sir,” replied Mary, demurely, yet blushing a little.

“And who next?” pursued he.

“Mr. Edward Hunter, sir.”

“And who is he?”

“Captain Hunter’s cousin.”

“Oh, aye—very well: who next?”

“Captain Scott, sir.”

“Who is he—another cousin of Captain Hunter, eh?”

“No, sir; only a friend of his.”

“I thought so,” said her father, chuckling.

“Mary was surrounded with red-coats the whole evening,” observed Mrs. Edwards. “I must say I should have been as well pleased to have seen her dancing with some of our old friends and neighbours, and less taken up with those soldiers.”

It was lucky for Mary that her father had been winning at cards, as he would otherwise, very probably, have been as much offended as her mother seemed to be on hearing of her conduct. He now, however, good-humouredly took her part—only saying—

“Pooh, pooh, my dear, the girl naturally likes officers, all girls do—besides, if those young men are quicker at asking her than others, how could she help dancing with them.”

Mrs. Edwards looked very little pleased

at an observation which was too true to be contradicted, and observed, in a general way, that she had always remarked girls could contrive to oblige their parents when they had a mind to do so.

“I hope you had your share of officers, Miss Emma,” said the old gentleman.

“Thank you, sir, I had quite sufficient,” said Emma, quietly.

“Oh, Miss Emma was almost above the officers, she got into the Osborne Castle set, and her partner was no less than Mr. Howard. Did Lord Osborne ask you?”

“No, ma’am,” replied Emma.

“I am sure he looked at you enough,” continued Mrs. Edwards; “I thought he was going to eat you.”

“I was not afraid of that,” said Emma, smiling; “but I own I was rather annoyed.”

“I think Mr. Musgrove was more insufferable than ever,” pursued Mrs. Edwards; “I am glad you did not dance with him,

Miss Emma ; really that young man is beyond bearing in his impertinence."

"Oh, you should not abuse him to Miss Emma; I dare say her sisters give a very different account of him; he is a great favorite with all of them, I know," said Mr. Edwards.

"I never heard anything of him which particularly prepossessed me in his favour," replied Emma, very coolly. "Elizabeth mentioned him, and, from what I have seen, I should think her description was very like the truth."

Little more was said by any one, and the party, after many yawns, separated for the night, to the great relief of their young guest, who was exceedingly sleepy, and longing for darkness and silence.

CHAPTER III.

THE next morning, as the ladies were quietly sitting together, and just as Emma was beginning to expect the arrival of her sister to take her home, a loud knock was heard at the door, which gave audible notice of a far more masculine hand than that of Elizabeth Watson. There was hardly time, however, for more than a brief wonder on the subject, when Mr. Musgrove was announced. The stiffness of Mrs. Edwards' reception, and the cold tranquil-

lity of Mary's manners, seemed to make no impression on him; at least, so Emma judged from there being no abatement of that air of self-complacency which had early struck her as belonging to him.

After the opening compliments to the party, he turned to Emma herself, and presenting a note, observed that this would, in part, explain and excuse his intrusion. It was from Elizabeth to herself, to say, that as her father had found himself better than usual, he had suddenly resolved to go to the visitation which happened that day, and in consequence of his thus employing the chaise, she could not come, as she had promised, to bring her sister home. She added, that she did not, in the least, know what Emma could do, only if the Edwardses asked her to remain, she thought that was the best thing that could be contrived.

After pondering over this unwelcome note for several minutes, Emma was just about to state the dilemma to Mrs. Edwards, when Tom Musgrove broke in.

“ I had an interest, Miss Emma, in bringing that note, and a message besides, from your sister, which you must allow me to state. I met Miss Watson in the village seeking for a messenger, and offered to do her errand, as she told me the object of it, on condition that she would sanction my bringing you home in my curricule. Believe me, it will be with the greatest delight that I will drive you to Winston, and the carriage is now at the door waiting for the honour of your occupation.”

Emma looked a little distressed.

“ Did Elizabeth really wish me to come home that way,” said she, hesitating.

“ I assure you, my proposal had her full and unqualified consent, and you have only to say the word, and now—in half an hour—an hour—two hours time—any time—I am at your service.”

“ I am much obliged to you,” replied Emma, embarrassed between her fear lest she should be supposed intruding on her hostess, and her extreme dislike of encour-

aging any appearance of intimacy with Mr. Musgrove; "but I do not think it is in the least degree necessary that I should give you the trouble. The walk is nothing, and I dare say I can easily find a person to carry my few things."

"The *trouble* is nothing, Miss Emma," cried he, "but the walk cannot be ranked in that way; three—four miles—what is it—five perhaps—and such mud and dirt to get through—and after dancing all night too: indeed it must be impossible. And there stand my horses—useless—unemployed save by my unworthy self—indeed you *must* accept my offer."

Emma would not yield; she was quite determined to encounter any inconvenience rather than accept the offered seat; and the more pressing he became the firmer her refusals grew.

Mrs. Edwards, who had been quietly listening to what was passing between them, no sooner ascertained that the inclination of her young visitor was decidedly opposed

to an offer, which *she* would have deemed it in the highest degree indecorous to accept, than with a very unusual warmth of manner on her part, she interposed, and greatly relieved Emma by saying:

“If Miss Watson can wait until after luncheon, I shall have great pleasure in conveying her home in our coach.”

This well-timed offer was gratefully and gladly accepted, but Tom loudly interposed.

“But you know, Mrs. Edwards, that is contrary to all your rules—quite impossible to have your horses out to-day, after their night-work. Surely you cannot really and seriously mean such a thing—and my cur-ricle here to make it quite unnecessary.”

“I do really mean it;” replied Mrs. Edwards steadily, “our carriage and horses are quite at Miss Watson’s service; and I am happy to relieve her from the risk which she evidently apprehends in so dashing an equipage as your curricle. She will, no doubt, feel much safer in our coach!”

The gentleman bit his lip, but was forced

to yield ; and turning to Emma, enquired :

“ How did it happen, Miss Emma, that none of your sisters were at the ball?—I don't think I saw them there all the evening.”

“ My eldest sister,” answered Emma coldly, “ could not leave my father, and she is the only one at home now.”

“ Oh, indeed; why how long have the others been away?” then without waiting for an answer, he continued—“ How did you like our ball last night? I suppose you did not keep it up much after I was gone!”

“ When did you leave the room?” enquired Emma, pleased to give him the retort courteous, for his affected ignorance about her sisters.

“ Oh, I did not stay after the Osbornes' party went away—I was tired and bored.”

“ And *we* enjoyed ourselves nearly two hours after that,” cried Emma, “ and as the room was less crowded with idlers who

would not dance, I think it was particularly pleasant."

"Upon my word, I wish I had known that, I really should have been tempted to come back, after seeing Miss Carr to the carriage," said Tom, "but you know, Mrs. Edwards, sometimes when one's particular friends are gone, one fancies all the rest will be dull—so I went to my room."

"Possibly," replied Mrs. Edwards, "but I am used to judge for myself in such matters, and therefore am not likely to be misled in the way you are now regretting."

After remaining as long as he could without very great rudeness, and receiving no invitation to stay and take luncheon, Mr. Musgrove drove off in his curricle, exceedingly astonished at the fact of the offered seat in it being so firmly rejected.

It was something quite new to him, for he had been used to consider the other Miss Watsons as quite at his disposal, and could hardly imagine that one of the family

could have ideas and feelings so diametrically opposed to her sisters'.

According to her promise, Mrs. Edwards' carriage safely conveyed Emma to her father's house in the course of that afternoon, Mary Edwards accompanying her, but not remaining many minutes, as she well knew their dinner hour was approaching, and she did not wish to be in their way.

No sooner had she withdrawn, than Elizabeth began expressing her extreme surprise at the fact of the Edwards' coach, coachman, and horses being considered in a state fit for use the day after the ball, as they always used to rest when they had been out at night.

“Only think of their sending you home, my dear Emma, I cannot tell you how surprised I am—I never knew such a thing done before.”

“I assure you, it was very kindly done, Elizabeth; and not only was the carriage placed at my service, but Mrs. Edwards'

manner became much more friendly from that time."

"Well, I wonder you did not accept Tom Musgrove's offer—or did he not make it—or did you get my note?"

"Yes; he brought the note; but, indeed, dear Elizabeth, I was so unprepared for your proposing, or allowing him to propose such a thing, that I thought you had, probably, known nothing about it; and that the whole was a device on his part. How could you imagine, after what you had yourself told me, that I would allow him to drive me about in that way. I could not do such a thing."

"Indeed, I had some scruples, Emma, about it; I did not like throwing you together in that way, but I could see no other means of your getting home—and I did long for that. Who would have thought of the Edwardses having out their coach? But I never, for a moment, expected you would refuse him. I don't think I could have done such a thing—though, I dare say, it

was quite right; I should not have had the resolution to resist such a temptation!"

"It was no temptation to me; and, therefore, required no extraordinary resolution Elizabeth. I thought it wrong, besides,—but I certainly should have disliked it."

"You do not mean to say you dislike Tom Musgrove!" cried Elizabeth, in great surprise; "did you not dance with him? Did he not ask you?"

"He did ask me, and I did not accept him," replied Emma, smiling at her sister's amazement, "but his manners do not please me; and I do not think that, having accepted him last night as a partner, would have made me wish for him to-day as a driver."

"Well, tell me all about it," cried Elizabeth, "I am longing to hear all about the ball. Who did you dance with? How did you like it—give me the whole history."

Emma complied, and related, as minutely as possible, all the events of the preceding

evening. Elizabeth's surprise on hearing it was extreme.

"Good gracious!" cried she, much agitated; "dance with Mr. Howard? Well, Emma, how could you venture? were you not frightened out of your wits? Dance with the man who plays at cards with old Lady Osborne!—whom she seems so fond of—well, you are the boldest little thing possible! And you say you were not afraid?"

"No, really," said Emma, "why should I be—he was quite the gentleman, I assure you."

"Oh, yes!" said Miss Watson, "a gentleman, of course he is; but, why should that prevent your being afraid? Did you talk to him? How did you know what to say?"

"There was no difficulty about that," replied Emma, "he was very agreeable and we had a great deal of conversation."

"Well, I am glad you were so noticed,

Emma," said her sister, kindly; "I knew you must be admired; and, really, am rejoiced that you have made so good a beginning. Dance with Mr. Howard—refuse Tom Musgrove—and come home in Mrs. Edwards' coach! I wonder what you will do next!"

"Come home in my own, we will hope," said Emma, laughing; "like a good girl in a fairy story—very grand in a gilt coach and four."

Elizabeth then proceeded to enquire about Mary Edwards and Captain Hunter; and the inference which she deduced from Emma's narrative, was extremely unfavorable to her brother's prospects. She declared she would write to Sam that evening, and tell him he had no hope.

"But here comes Jenny with the dinner. Poor Emma! you will not dine as well as you did yesterday. There is only fried beef—for, as my father was gone out, and I hardly expected you, I did not think it

worth while to get any thing more. If I had been sure of your coming, I would have got you a chop."

"Quite unnecessary, dear Elizabeth, I do not care what I eat," replied Emma, as she moved her chair to the table.

"That is so pleasant of you, Emma," said Elizabeth, "I must say, with all your refinement, you are easier pleased than either Pen or Margaret. How very comfortably we could live together."

Mr. Watson returned from the visitation and the dinner in very good spirits.

"I am very glad I went," said he, "people were all very kind, and the dinner was very good. I don't know how many people told me they were glad to see me, and I had some capital venison—there was turbot too, and hare soup—all excellent—and a very civil young clergyman, a very nice young man indeed, would help me down to dinner, and took care I had a warm seat, and saved me the trouble of calling for things. I thought it very kind of him,

I think his name is Howard. He asked after my daughter too—I don't know which he meant at all—but I suppose you can tell amongst yourselves. I really don't know when I passed a more pleasant afternoon!"

The next morning, however, brought a different story. The unusual exertion combined with turbot and venison, brought on a violent fit of the gout, and for a day or two the girls hardly left their father's room, or had any other pursuit or occupation than attempting to relieve his pain, or amuse his intervals of rest.

The third day after the ball, whilst Jenny was slowly preparing the dinner-table in the parlour, with more noise than despatch, the two girls standing over the fire looking at her movements, the door-bell was heard following the tread of horses on the gravel at the entrance.

"Who can that possibly be?" cried Elizabeth, "run and let them in, Jenny—no, stop,

I think you had better not—just say your master is ill.”

Jenny bustled off—leaving the knife-basket on the floor, and the cloth half opened on the table. A moment of silent suspense followed, when in reply to some mutterings of Jenny, they heard through the door which she had left open Tom Musgrove’s voice—

“Oh, never mind, we will go in all the same; we came to enquire for Mr. Watson.”

And another voice, laughing harshly, was heard, and steps along the passage, which excited Elizabeth to such a degree, that she hastily twitched off the unspread cloth, and threw it into a chair behind the door—which she had just time to do, before the visitors presented themselves unannounced; for Jenny was too much astonished at the event to find tongue to utter the names of Lord Osborne and Mr. Musgrove; but stood with her mouth open gazing in the passage. Elizabeth felt excessive surprise at this unexpected visit, to a degree which almost

made her unconscious of what she was doing. Shame at being detected by Lord Osborne in dining at three o'clock, and doubt how to behave to him—an inclination to apologise for her homely appearance, plain stuff-gown and untidy room, which, however, was fortunately checked by her uncertainty how to express herself properly, all contended in her mind; when the first gush of surprise was abated, it was quite a relief to her, to shake hands with her old friend Tom Musgrove, and to see him seat himself without ceremony. Emma, on the contrary, felt this intrusion extremely impertinent and ill-bred; what excuse was there for Lord Osborne calling in this way; there never had been any acquaintance previously between the families, her father had never been noticed by the inhabitants of the Castle, nor invited there as many of the neighbouring gentry were; and now that he was ill, and they knew it, she was indignant that they should

thus force themselves on her sister and herself.

Her own curtsey was as stiff and reserved, as if she had been taking lessons of Mrs. Edwards; and she resumed her seat without feeling the slightest inclination to converse herself, and being almost displeased with Elizabeth for the easy manner in which she allowed, or perhaps encouraged, Tom Musgrove to address her. Lord Osborne's visit was certainly meant for Emma, for he placed himself near her, and sat some minutes with his eyes fixed on her countenance, until she began to think he meant to preserve the same conduct in her father's house, as he had done at the ball.

At length, however, he spoke:

"It's a beautiful morning; ain't you going to walk to-day?"

"No, my Lord," replied she quietly, raising her eyes from her work, "I think it is too dirty!"

"You should wear boots," said he, "nan-

keen with black tops, look very nice, when a woman has a pretty ankle."

She had nothing to object to his taste, and did not reply.

"Do you ride?" continued he.

"No, my lord."

"Why not? every woman should ride; a woman never looks so well as on horse-back, well mounted, and in a handsome habit—you *should* ride—don't you like it?"

"There are, sometimes, other impediments, my lord, besides want of taste, even to so becoming an amusement," replied Emma, gravely.

"Eh? I don't understand," resumed he, "what prevents you?"

"I have no horse," replied Emma, thinking *that* the shortest way of finishing the subject, and reducing it to the level of his capacity.

"Then your father should keep one for you," observed he.

"My father cannot afford it," said Emma,

decidedly; "and I have no wish to act in a way inconsistent with our circumstances."

"Poor is he? how uncomfortable!" said Lord Osborne, "why, what's his income, do you suppose?" continuing in the tone in which he would have questioned a day labourer as to his wages.

"It is a point upon which I never thought myself entitled to enquire," she replied, drawing herself proudly up, and speaking in a tone not to be misunderstood.

Lord Osborne looked at her with surprise, which was gradually converted into admiration at the beautiful effect of the colour which dyed her cheek as she spoke. An idea crossed his mind that, perhaps, he had not been sufficiently civil, and he tried to soften his voice, and put on a more winning manner.

"The hounds meet next Monday about a mile from here, at Upham—will you not come and see them throw off. It's a pretty sight."

"I do not think it will be in my power, my lord."

"I wish you could—did you ever see it?"

"Never."

"Well, you cannot imagine how gay it is; we have such a capital breakfast always at Upham Lodge; then the scarlet coats round the edge of the cover; the horses—the talking and laughing, the ladies who drive over to see us—though I often think them rather a bore—then the great burst when the dogs do find; and off they go away, and we after them, and forget every thing in the world, except one wish, to be in at the death. You cannot think how exciting it is. Do come."

"Thank you, my lord; but I must be satisfied with your description. I cannot accept your invitation."

"Perhaps you are afraid of the cold; my sister caught a dreadful cold one day, when she came in an open carriage, and it was wet; are you thinking of that?"

“No, for I did not know it before.”

“Didn’t you? She was ill a month; I was monstrous sorry for her—for you see it was partly my fault; I persuaded her to come; I don’t know how it is. I rather like to have her with me—some men don’t.”

Emma could hardly suppress a smile at this eloquent demonstration of his fraternal affection. She began, however, to think that if Lord Osborne liked his sister there might be some good in him; which, before, she had been inclined to question. The gentlemen sat long, although Tom Musgrove, at least, must have been perfectly aware that he was encroaching on their dinner hour; and Emma was growing exceedingly weary of the looks of Lord Osborne, who sunk into repeated fits of silence, which were interrupted by abrupt and disconnected questions or observations. At length, they were all roused by the maid servant, who, putting her head into the half-opened doorway, called out:

“Please ma’am, Master wants to know why he beant to have any dinner to-day!”

This very unmistakeable announcement, brought a deep blush to Elizabeth’s cheek, who, interrupting her chat with Tom Musgrove, said:

“Very well, Jenny, I hear.”

The gentlemen now rose to go, and, to Emma’s great relief, took leave; Elizabeth calling briskly after the maid, as she was shewing them out, to tell Nanny to take up the fowls immediately.

“Well,” said she, drawing a long breath when the room was once more quiet, “what are we to think of this? I wonder whether Lord Osborne saw the knife-tray? I hope he did not notice, or what he thinks of us dining at this hour!”

“I must say, I think it was taking an unwarrantable liberty,” cried Emma, “calling in this way—very impertinent and disagreeable—though he is a lord, what right has he to intrude on us?”

“Do you think so, Emma? well, it did not strike me so—I was only hoping he would not notice the table-cloth or the steel forks. I know they have silver ones every day at Osborne Castle. I wish Jenny had not began putting out the things, or had not brought that tiresome message.”

“He never called here before, why should he come now without excuse or apology?” persisted Emma.

“Why, to see you to be sure—and very good use he made of his eyes. Now really, Emma, you ought not to quarrel with him, for it is evidently admiration of you that brings him here.”

“I do not care for admiration without respect, Elizabeth, and I hope the visit will not be repeated.”

Her father’s opinion quite coincided with hers, when he came to hear of the visit in question. There had been no acquaintance between old Lord Osborne and himself, he observed, and he would have none with his son, of whom he had formed a very mo-

derate opinion; and as to Tom Musgrove, he was always coming when he was not wanted, and scampering after Lord Osborne in an absurd way: what right had such a Tom Fool as he to interfere with his dinner hour, or cause the roast fowls to be overdone.

CHAPTER IV.

THE approach of Christmas week, was to bring the great event of Elizabeth's year—namely, a visit from her eldest brother and his wife, who were to return with Margaret and spend a few days at Winston. Elizabeth evidently looked up very much to Mrs. Robert Watson, who, she assured Emma, had been educated in a very superior way—a London boarding-school—her father had been very wealthy, and her mother most genteel; she had, too, an uncle, who

was a knight, in London, and quite a distinguished person there—so that altogether, Jane was an honor to the family, whilst her talents and taste alone were sufficient to procure distinction in the first circles.

Emma was uncertain, but most anxious to like her sister-in-law; she felt half amused and half doubtful, whilst Elizabeth enumerated all the advantages of Robert's grand marriage. However, she exerted herself with the greatest good-will, to assist in the numerous preparations necessary on such an occasion. Nothing was too good for Jane—though Emma could hardly help wondering to see that the drawing-room was to be used—the furniture and mirror uncovered—the best china produced, and all the plate had out to grace their visitors. For a brother and sister, she fancied this would have been unnecessary; and she wished, with a sigh, that there had been more consistency between their every-day life, and the appearance they were now expected to make.

Elizabeth was one of the worst house-keepers possible; with a little more system and management, her father's income might have produced a respectable appearance at all times; but as there was not the smallest attention given by Mr. Watson to his household affairs, beyond paying the bills, and finding fault with the dinners, everything was in confusion from one week to another. Elizabeth had much of the easy, good-natured indolence of her father, but was spurred up by necessity to unwilling exertions; and ill seconded by her untidy maid servants, who knew she was too good-natured to scold; she was always excessively put out of her way by preparations for company. Her total want of arrangement, and the facility with which she was diverted from one object to another, made her twice as long as necessary in every occupation. Thus, for instance, it was in vain that she had promised Emma to return to the china closet, and tell her which articles would be wanted from thence; for

happening to see Jenny awkwardly attempting to clean some plate, she stayed so long to show her how to do it, that Emma, in despair of her return, was induced to seek her, and with difficulty persuaded her to resume her occupation up stairs.

Such was her ordinary mode of proceeding. In spite, however, of these delays, and the loss of time incurred, the preparations were at length complete; and Elizabeth having surveyed the dinner-table with much satisfaction, and wished, with a sigh, that they could keep a foot boy, returned to the drawing-room to wait the arrival of her visitors.

The happy moment shortly arrived, and with much noise and bustle Mr. and Mrs. Robert Watson, Margaret, and all their luggage were safely lodged in the family residence. Emma looked with much anxiety at both her unknown sisters, but at Mrs. Watson first, of course; indeed, few could have helped that, from the prominence which she assumed. She was a tall,

showy-looking woman, with a high nose, a high colour, and very high feathers in her bonnet. She seemed much inclined to talk, and received Emma very cordially. Margaret was excessively affectionate in her manners, clung round her, called her "her dear new sister," her "darling Emma," pushed back the curls from her cheeks to kiss her, and spoke in the fondest, most caressing tone.

"Well you see, Elizabeth," said Mrs. Robert, "I have brought Margaret back; but she is a naughty girl, and I am much displeased with her, for I want to take her home again to Croydon on Saturday, and she says she will not go."

This was said as Mrs. Robert was stroking down her long fur tippet, and spreading out her hands at the fire, and concluded with a playful tap on Margaret's cheek.

"Ah, dear Jane," said Margaret, "you know how I like being with you, but indeed

I cannot tear myself from sweet Emma immediately."

"Saturday!" cried Elizabeth; "you surely do not think of leaving us on Saturday! That will be only three days—only half a visit; you promised us a week."

"Did I?—no, sure I could not have done so: you know I cannot be so long from my little girl, and she would break her heart without me."

"I wish you could have brought her," said Elizabeth.

"Quite impossible, my dear child, for I never like to take her out without her own maid, and I know you could not give her a room to herself as she has been used to. I am excessively particular about her," she continued, turning to Emma, "too particular, perhaps, but it was the way we were brought up—so you must not blame me."

"Of course not," replied Emma; "for doing what you think right, who could?"

“I am sure,” continued this anxious mother, in a tone of great complacency, “I don’t know how the poor little darling will get on without me; she almost cried her eyes out when she found she was not coming in the chaise, and I was obliged to pretend I was only going to church, and should be home again very soon.’”

“Oh, sweet little darling!” cried Margaret; “I do so dote on that child—little angel!”

Just at this moment, the brother entered the room.

“I say, Jane,” cried he, “that confounded band-box of yours is squeezed as flat as a pancake, and your new trunk is too wide to go up these wretched narrow stairs; so what you are to do I am sure I don’t know—dress in the hall, I suppose.”

“My band-box squeezed!” cried the lady, in dismay. “I have no doubt my caps are all ruined absolutely: what shall I do!—how could it happen to my band-box!”

“Do anything but bother me about it, that’s all. “Ah, Emma,” holding out his hand to his sister, “how do you do. It’s a good while since we met, isn’t it? I suppose, Elizabeth, I may go up at once and see my father before dinner?”

Elizabeth assented, and the whole party seemed about to separate.

“I suppose, Elizabeth,” said Margaret, in a tone whose sharpness jarred on Emma’s ear and contrasted with the softness of her voice to herself, “there’s no letter for me from Kew, is there? But I dare say if there were, you would not think of giving it to me for an hour.”

Elizabeth assured her there was none, and then quitted the room, to accompany her sister-in-law, and assist her toilette.

“Well, Emma,” said Margaret, resuming her fondling tone, “how do you like Winston? I am sure, but for one thing, I should never wish to see it again,” looking down, and trying to blush as she spoke; “*one* attraction it has: have you seen any

of the neighbours?—did you not go to the ball?—do tell me all about it!”

“I think we must go and dress for dinner, Margaret,” said Emma.

“Well, you can tell me then, for I suppose,” added she, in an injured tone, “you and I are to have one room—Elizabeth always takes care of herself, and will be sure to put you upon me.”

“No,” said Emma, “Elizabeth has agreed that I should share her room.”

“Oh,” said Margaret—then paused a moment—“well, I was in hopes *we* should have slept together—I am sure I shall love you so much, Emma.”

“I am sure it will give me great pleasure if you do,” replied her sister; “but Margaret, if I cannot be of use to you, I must go and get ready for dinner myself;” and she hastily escaped to her own room.

When Emma descended again, she found her brother alone in the drawing-room, leaning over the fire-place, looking at a number of the “Gentleman’s Magazine,”

which, however, he tossed on the table when Emma approached.

“Well, Emma,” said he, lifting his coat-tails, and turning his back to the fire, “so your aunt has thrown you off, and herself away, has she? A pretty mess she has made of it with her marriage. Upon my word, women are entirely unfit to be trusted with money in any shape, and there ought to be a law against old fools of widows marrying again. How our uncle could be such a confounded ass as to leave everything in her power, I cannot conceive! Any one could have foreseen what has happened. I hope the young husband will plague her heart out—no doubt he will lead her a wretched life—she deserves it. But I think the old gentleman might have given you something—a thousand pounds or so would have done very well for you, and the rest would have been most particularly acceptable to me just now. There was an investment offered itself, a month or two ago, in which I could have, beyond a doubt,

doubled five thousand pounds in a very short time, and it was particularly cutting to be obliged to let it pass me, because that old man had behaved so shabbily. Upon my life, it makes me quite angry when I think of it—and just to throw you back upon my father's hands, without a sixpence—a burden—a useless burden upon the family—what could he be thinking of!”

Emma was too much overcome by the many bitter feelings this speech raised, to be able to reply; and her brother, seeing her tears, said :

“ Well, I did not mean to make you cry, Emma; there's no good in that—though I do not wonder that you should be mortified and disappointed too. Girls are nothing without money—no one can manage them—but you shall come and try your luck at Croydon. Perhaps, with your face, and the idea that you have still expectations, you might get off our hands altogether. There was a young man at Croydon who was very near taking Margaret. I really believe,

would have had her, if she had only a couple of thousand pounds, but you can but do your best, so there, don't cry."

Before Emma had time to do more than wipe her eyes, her sister-in-law entered the room very smart, and in high spirits, to find herself more handsomely dressed than either of the Miss Watsons. She was much discomposed, however, to find that her husband had not changed his coat, or dressed his hair.

"My dear Mr. Watson," cried she, "how comes this about? Don't you mean to make yourself tidy before dinner?"

"Do let me alone, Jane," said he, impatiently shaking off her hand; "I trust I am tidy enough for my wife and sisters."

"Oh! but do come up, for my sake, and put just a sprinkle of powder on your hair. I will do it in a moment for you. You really look quite undressed; upon my word, I am ashamed of you. Your coat all dirty, and quite unfit to be seen—do come."

“Do go! For goodness sake, do let me alone,” said he, shrugging his shoulders; “You women, who think of nothing but bedizening yourselves out, fancy we have nothing else to do either. You are fine enough for us both, so pray let me alone.”

Mrs. Watson covered her mortification by an affected laugh, and retreating to the sofa, cried out:

“Emma, do come, and let me have a little conversation with you, there’s a good girl.”

Emma coloured, but obeyed the summons; and her sister, after surveying her dress with satisfaction, seemed, for a moment, to hesitate how to begin.

“You do not dress your hair, Emma, quite *en regle*—you understand French, I suppose, now look at mine—your curls are too long—really, it’s a pity, for you have pretty hair—a nice color—very much the same as mine. How odd,” laughing, “that you should be so dark—like me—all your

sisters quite fair—you should not put your tucker so high—mine is quite the *ton*—you see how the lace is arranged—how do you like Winston? I suppose you have not much company? I dare say, it is dull; you shall come to Croydon, as Margaret will not go back, and I will shew you a little of the world. Have you been used to much company?”

“Not much,” replied Emma.

“Well, then, Croydon will be a pleasant change. I wonder at that, however, I thought your uncle was a man of wealth. My father saw so much society; and, at my uncle’s, Sir Thomas, I am sure I have met the best company in London.”

“Indeed,” said Emma, not very well knowing what else to say.

“In consequence, I am quite accustomed to move in a gay circle—though my friends there, tell me, indeed, I am quite the Queen of Croydon. I believe I am rather looked up to—one is, you know, when one has high relations, and goes to town, and gets pat-

terns and books from London; now, it's something quite remarkable the number of houses we visit—and the white gloves I wear out in the year—I am excessively particular about my gloves; and Margaret, whose hand is small, was quite glad to take some of mine; and, really, when she had cleaned them a little, they did very well for her. *I* seldom wear them a second time. You will come to Croydon—will you not?”

“Thank you, not this winter; you are very kind in asking me; but I have been so short a time at home.”

“Oh! but you must: I assure you, you will have much the best chance in the winter, there are so many more young men in the country then. But, perhaps, you have left your heart in Shropshire. Have you any little charming love story to confide to me. Ah! you may trust me—I assure you I am very discreet—I never betrayed Margaret the least in the world.’”

Emma again declined the proposed visit to Croydon. Her sister-in-law looked much surprised, and not quite pleased.

“Well I should have thought our house might have some attractions for a young lady of your age; however, of course you know best, I hope you will find something more pleasing here.”

Emma was spared the trouble of replying by the entrance of Margaret and Elizabeth, who were immediately engrossed by attentions to Mrs. Robert, which soothed her into complacency again. Dinner speedily followed; the early hour was a subject of comment on the part of the visitors.

“Dear me, I wonder when I dined at three o'clock before—really a little change is quite amusing, I am so glad you did not think it necessary to alter your hour for me.”

“I certainly would have fixed on any hour agreeable to you, Jane,” replied Miss Watson good humouredly, “but my father has so long been used to this time, that it

would be very unpleasant to him to alter it. But I dare say it seems very gothic to you."

"Oh, pray do not think any apology necessary, my dear child; you know what an accommodating creature I am. There is nothing I hate half so much as having a fuss made about me. Now really in some places where I go, they will make me of so much importance, treat me so much as a visitor—in short, I may say, look up so much to me, that upon my word it is quite overpowering."

"I know you are very good-natured, to put up with our deficiencies as you do, Jane," replied Elizabeth simply and sincerely, "and no doubt they must strike you forcibly. I wish we could treat you better, but I hope you can make a good meal even at three o'clock; you see your dinner, all except a roast turkey which is coming presently."

"A roast turkey, Elizabeth!" said her sister-in-law, "after all this profusion

which I see around me. Upon my word, I am ashamed of giving so much trouble; positively ashamed: such a dinner, and all for me. Really I must forbid the roast turkey—I insist on that not being brought. I cannot bear that you should be so put out of your way.”

“But, my dear Jane,” observed Elizabeth, “since the turkey is roasted, it may as well come in here, as remain in the kitchen. Besides, I am in hopes my father may be tempted to take some, as it is a favorite dish of his—so the roast turkey we must have.”

“Well, as you please,” said the other lady, “only I hope you will not expect *me* to take any of it; I must protest against partaking any of it at all.”

“Do as you please, Jane,” said her husband, interposing, “but because you reject the turkey, I see no reason why *I* should be deprived of it, so I must beg Elizabeth not to mind your nonsense.”

The party, after leaving the dining-room,

were sitting amicably in the best parlour, Robert Watson apparently asleep in an easy-chair, and his lady holding forth to her sisters-in-law about her parties, her acquaintance, and her manner of living at Croydon, when the sound of carriage wheels on the gravel under the window, followed by the house-bell, drew their attention and aroused their curiosity; who could it be? perhaps Penelope, returned suddenly from Chichester—it was just like her to come without giving notice; perhaps Sam, but he was so unlikely to come at all—nobody could decide—but the opening door seconding Jenny's voice, revealed the mystery, and shewed Tom Musgrove!

Mr. Musgrove's share of the surprise was great—quite as great as what he intended to occasion — when instead of being shewn into the little dingy sitting-room as usual, and finding the two Miss Watsons sitting, as he expected, by the melancholy light of a pair of sixes—he was ushered into the best drawing-room, graced by the

uncovered chandelier and best sofa; and encountered in a blaze of wax candles, which almost dazzled him, a group of ladies dressed for company. He really hardly knew where he was, and glanced round with excessive astonishment.

“Really, Miss Watson,” cried he, whilst shaking hands with her, “I must apologise for this intrusion; I did not know you had company.”

“You are exceedingly welcome,” replied Elizabeth, with much more good-nature than Emma approved. “It is my brother and sister: they only arrived to-day.”

“Yes,” said Robert, who, on surveying Tom’s appearance, so elegant and finished as it appeared to him, in point of dress, felt much mortification on remembering his own unpowdered hair, and morning coat; “yes, we have not been long in the house—not long enough, you see, to change our travelling costume: but just in time to sit down to dinner.”

Emma’s cheeks glowed in spite of her

wishes, at this speech, and she stole a glance at the wife to see how she bore it. That lady's eyes seemed merely to speak an internal triumph as she looked at her husband, as if she meant, at the first convenient opportunity, to enforce the propriety of Robert's taking her advice in future.

“Never apologise for your dress, my good sir,” cried Tom, shaking hands with him ; “at least, not to me, for I shall consider it a reflection on my own vile dishabille. But the fact is, I was passing this way, being on my return from Osborne Castle, where I have been spending a few days, and I could not go so near, without just stopping to enquire how Mr. Watson goes on.”

Margaret, who ever since his entrance, had been trying to attract his attention, could now be repulsed no longer. She would speak, and be spoken to ; and the tone and manner in which she addressed Mr. Musgrove, together with the pains she

took to secure his having a chair next her when they all sat down, showed Emma that she was by no means reduced to despair about his supposed attachment.

“It is long since we have met,” said she, in a soft, whispering voice, looking up in his face with what was intended for an endearing smile.

“A week or two,” said he, carelessly.

“Fie, naughty man—it is a month—a whole month—you ought not to be a worse reckoner of time than myself—it was very kind of you to come and welcome me home.”

“Don’t thank me for that: I did not know you were here, I assure you; I knew you were not at the ball; but I thought it was a sore throat, or something of that sort kept you away: have you really been gone a month!—I could have sworn I saw you a week ago. Your sister has come, I suppose, since you left?”

“Emma! oh yes, charming Emma—imagine my feelings at meeting her—I was

so anxious, but so fearful—timid as I am, you can fancy how afraid I should feel at meeting a new sister. Can you not understand the feeling?”

“Not the least in the world,” cried Tom aloud; “I cannot fancy any one afraid of meeting Miss Emma Watson.”

“Is she not lovely—I think her quite beautiful—but, perhaps, you do not admire dark complexions—tell me, which do you like best—brunette or blonde.”

Tom hesitated. Margaret herself was fair, which would alone have been a sufficient reason for his asserting a preference for an olive skin—but then Miss Carr was fair likewise—and he was a great admirer of Miss Carr’s. He, therefore, replied evasively—

“Your sister’s is, no doubt, a very lovely complexion—I like dark beauties excessively—but now and then one sees a blonde, whose tint is relieved from the insipidity which usually attends it—Miss

Carr, for instance—did you ever see Fanny Carr?”

“No,” said Margaret, almost pouting.

“She has the loveliest skin I ever saw—and a very nice little thing is Fanny Carr, independent of her complexion—a very nice, lively, bewitching little fairy, with those she likes—though, to be sure, she can be disagreeable enough, I am told—but, Miss Watson,” continued he, jumping up to put an end to Margaret’s whispers, “do let me help you at the tea-table—why will you not make me of use—pray don’t scruple to call on me—I love to be of use to the fair.”

“I know no way in which you can possibly assist me,” replied Elizabeth, “until the tea is ready to be handed round—unless you will talk to and amuse my sister, Mrs. Robert, whilst I am obliged to sit here.”

This was a task which exactly suited Tom, as to a married woman, he might be

as gallant as he chose with perfect safety, and he devoted himself with great zeal to this object. Nothing could prevail upon him to take tea yet—as he had not dined, and he could not drink tea first.

“ I dare say you dined three hours ago,” said he, “ but I, you know, keep bachelor’s hours, and at Osborne Castle we never sat down to dinner until six or seven o’clock.”

“ Indeed,” said Mrs. Robert, “ but you must not suppose that I am used to such early hours; at Croydon, I dare say it is nearer five than four when *we* dine.”

“ That would be too early for me,” cried he, with a smile of superiority, “ I would as soon it were three as five—seven, or indeed eight, suits me better; and I must get home to dinner to-night.”

It was evident that the fact of his not having dined, gave him a happy consciousness of vast mental superiority over his companions. But Emma found herself sadly deceived in the hopes which she had ventured fondly to cherish, that the dinner

awaiting him would hasten his departure. On the contrary, when the tea-things were removed, and the card-table produced, a very slight hint from Mrs. Watson was quite sufficient to draw from him a speech, which beginning with a statement of the necessity of quitting them, ended, of course, with an assertion of the impossibility of tearing himself away: and he was then quite ready to join their party; keeping his dinner still in waiting, as a subject to be reverted to whenever other topics failed him.

“Well, ladies,” cried he, “what are we to play—what’s your favorite game, Mrs. Watson.”

“Oh, we play nothing but Vingt’un at Croydon,” said she, “all the best circles play Vingt’un—it is decidedly the most genteel.”

“Vingt’un—hum—very well—let it be vingt’un then,” said Tom; “it’s a long time since I played it; Lady Osborne likes too best—indeed, I believe amongst people

of a certain rank, loo is all the rage—but, however, since you are bent on—commerce, was that what you said, Mrs. Watson?”

“Oh, dear no,” cried she, colouring, and overawed by the superiority of his tone, “I merely mentioned vingt’un, but I quite agree with you, it is rather a stupid game, and I am quite tired of it. Suppose we try loo to-night?” And she privately resolved to store up in her memory the important fact, that Lady Osborne preferred loo to vingt’un, and on her return to Croydon, astonish her former acquaintance with her intimate knowledge of her ladyship’s taste and habits.

“As I happen to prefer loo to vingt’un,” said Robert Watson, ashamed of being supposed to following any one’s fashions, yet, from habitual servility to the great, afraid of asserting a difference of opinion; “I see no harm in playing it, otherwise, had I liked any other game better, I should certainly have seen Lady Osborne at Jericho

before I would have allowed her to interfere."

An idea crossed Emma's mind, that in all probability nothing could be farther from Lady Osborne's wishes or notions, than influencing their choice of a game; and that if their debate could possibly be revealed to her, she would, perhaps, consider it impertinent in them, to make her diversions a pattern for theirs. Loo, however, they were fated to play; and Emma, who hated cards, thought with regret of the quiet evenings she had formerly enjoyed so much, when chatting over her needle-work with Elizabeth, or reading at intervals to her father some favourite author.

Their party did not break up until supper-time, of which, of course, Tom Musgrove was pressed to stay and partake. But he, who was determined to call his next meal a dinner, felt himself forced to refuse, although, in truth, he would much

rather have accepted the offer, could his vanity have allowed him to follow his inclination.

Mrs. Watson whispered to her sister, to ask him to join them at dinner the next day, which Elizabeth acceded to with great cordiality. They were to have a few friends to dinner, and if he could condescend to eat at five o'clock, perhaps he might find it in other respects agreeable, and they would be happy to see him. He hesitated and demurred, not from any doubt as to his final determination, but because he meant to give his acceptance a greater grace.

“As I am well aware of Mr. Musgrove’s habits of intimacy with my sister,” said Mrs. Watson, simpering; “I shall conclude, if he refuses now, it is poor unfortunate *me*, whom he despises and avoids.”

“My dear Mrs. Watson,” cried he, “you prevent my saying another word; everything must give way before such an accusation. Even if Lord Osborne himself sends for me—which is not unlikely—I shall refuse

to attend on him for your sake. Only do not expect me, Miss Watson, to make any figure at your hospitable board. I shall be happy to look on, as a spectator, but eating indeed must be quite out of the question."

"Very well; you shall do as you please, remember five o'clock."

"What a very delightful young man," cried Mrs. Watson, as soon as he left the room. "Upon my word, I do not know when I have met one more perfectly well bred and gentleman-like. I look upon myself to be a pretty good judge—having had much opportunity of judging—more than most young women, both at my dear father's, and my uncle Sir Thomas's; and, really, in my poor taste, he is quite the thing. Such charming vivacity, and yet, such attention when one speaks—and he really seems to understand and appreciate one's feelings and sentiments so thoroughly—and such a graceful bow; I assure you I am quite delighted."

Elizabeth cast a triumphant look at Emma, as much as to say :

“Now, what do you say?” but Emma’s judgment was not to be lightly shaken. Margaret looked down amiably modest and tried to blush, whilst she whispered :

“I am so glad *you* liked him. I knew you would! Was it not attentive to call to-day!” from which Emma inferred, that she took the compliment of his call entirely to herself.

CHAPTER V.

It was to be a very grand thing, indeed, the next day; and Elizabeth, seldom entertaining company, was quite in a fidget about the dinner, and tormented Emma all the time she was undressing, with questions, which could not be answered, and fears which could not be dispelled.

“Suppose Mr. Robinson were to be very cross, Emma, you cannot imagine how disagreeable he is then—or only fancy if

the soup turns out ill, what shall I do? Do you really think my black satin gown good enough ; I think nobody will see, by candle-light, where the cream was spilt; and it does not look ill—how tired you look, Emma ; well, I will not tease you, only I want to know how did my aunt manage about—oh ! by-the-bye, I'll ask Jane that." So Emma never learnt what it was, being too weary to ask.

A short silence followed.

" Now you see," burst out Elizabeth afresh, " you see, Emma, what Jane thinks of Tom Musgrove—you must change your mind."

" No, indeed ; her liking him can make no difference to me," replied Emma, quietly.

" Oh, Emma ! I did not think you so conceited, to think of your setting up your opinion against Jane's, a married woman, and so much older and more experienced ; I could not have expected it."

“I do not set up my opinion against her, I only differ in taste,” said her sister meekly, being very anxious to be allowed to go to sleep.

“You are quite impracticable, and, I fear, very obstinate,” returned Elizabeth, with a gravity which made Emma smile in spite of her weariness. Then followed another long silence, and she was dropping into a comfortable slumber, when she was startled by Elizabeth springing up, and exclaiming: “Oh! I quite forgot—what shall I do?”

“What is the matter?” enquired Emma, quite alarmed.

“Why, I forgot to tell Nanny to be sure and put the custards into the safe, for there’s a hole in the corner of the larder, where the cat gets in, and she will be certain to eat them all before morning.”

“Oh,” said Emma, as her eyes again closed irresistibly, and whether or not her sister quitted her bed to go down and rectify her error, she could not tell, for she, at length, dropped fast asleep.

Emma spent the greater part of the next day in her father's room. It was much more agreeable to her than the drawing-room; and Elizabeth, with all her good qualities, was not equal to her as a nurse, and really loved society and conversation, or rather chit-chat, so much as to be very glad to believe her sister's assertion, that she took pleasure in attending on her father. Mr. Watson, though indolent and self-indulgent, was a scholar, and enjoyed the pursuits of literature when not attended by too much labour. Emma found, as he recovered, that there was much to be gained by intercourse with him: she read to him both in English and French, and only regretted that she could not also assist him in Latin or Greek. Hour after hour she had devoted to amusing him, and felt herself well repaid by the affection he manifested in return; and now that the society down stairs, of course, compelled Elizabeth to absent herself, she rejoiced that it made her presence doubly necessary. She could

not like her sister-in-law—she saw so much of peevishness in Margaret's general manner as to expect the same would be manifested to her, and Robert had so pained and shocked her by their first *tête-à-tête*, that she never approached him without dread lest he should renew so painful a subject.

A proposal to remain with her father all the evening, instead of appearing at dinner was negatived. He would not permit her to do so, as it really was not necessary for his comfort, and he expected amusement from her description of the dinner-party after it was over.

It was not a very large one; the size of their dining-parlour forbade that—besides their own party of five, there made their appearance Mr. and Mrs. Robinson, the country apothecary and his wife; Mrs. Steady, the widow of a former curate, who lived in the village, and Mr. Martin, who was doing duty for their father during his illness. To these had been added, as we already know, Tom Musgrove; and happy

would it have been for the others had he been omitted, as it was impossible for so fashionable a young man to be guilty of such rustic simplicity as to be punctual. The guests whose appetites were set to that particular hour, displayed sundry symptoms of extreme impatience, and Robert Watson vented certain unintelligible ejaculations which were commonly supposed to be murmurs at his tardiness. Mr. Martin, a very absent individual, not having his wife at hand to remind him where he was, leant his head on his hand, and fell into a fit of abstraction. Mr. Robinson, who was making himself agreeable to Mrs. Watson, internally comforted himself with the hope that this long fast would be productive of evil to their digestive faculties, which he should be called in to set to rights.

Mrs. Steady was condoling with Elizabeth on the expected consequences of this delay, anticipating that the beef would be over roasted, and the chickens boiled to rags, and comparing this ill-bred fashionable

behaviour with the regularity and decorum of her late lamented Steady. Emma was laboriously trying to talk to Mrs. Robinson, who looked all the while as if she thought that somehow the delay was all her fault, and feared to drop out a syllable, lest she should be punished for it; whilst Margaret who had dressed herself with unusual care, sat in a state of feverish impatience by the side of her sister-in-law, whispering to her, every few minutes, that she was sure some shocking accident had happened to *him*—*he* little knew the misery he caused her—and other ejaculations of a similar character.

Half an hour passed in this manner, when Robert approached his sister, in a glow of indignant hunger that could be no longer suppressed.

“ Really, Elizabeth, I think this is too bad—there’s no occasion that we should all starve, because that young fellow is not hungry—ten to one but he has forgotten his engagement, and we may wait till supper

time for our meal, and he none the better. Do order dinner, I say, and leave him in the lurch for his inattention."

"Oh fie, my dear Mr. Watson!" cried his wife, quite shocked to think her husband should be guilty of the vulgarity of having an appetite; "Oh fie—sit down to dinner without our guest—you cannot really think of such a thing; you cannot possibly mean it—what does it matter if we dine now, or an hour hence? I am sure *we* do not keep such early hours ourselves. I have seen too much of fashionable life to be much surprised at his tardiness. You cannot expect punctuality from such a very agreeable, pleasant young man!"

"Pooh, pooh, Jane, I tell you, you know nothing about it. I cannot expect pleasure from such a very unpunctual young man—that's what you should say—it's very rude,—and he is very ill bred—and would never do for business."

"Business! Tom Musgrove do for business!" cried Margaret, indignantly, "I

should think not—whoever thought of business and Tom Musgrove in the same breath ?”

“Not many, I dare say,” observed Robert, contemptuously, “but if he has no business to occupy him, the less excuse is there for his preposterous conduct.”

“My dear,” said Mrs. Watson, with decision ; he is very genteel—and genteel people, when they have an independent fortune, are not obliged to be so regular as others—Tom Musgrove is very genteel.”

“You know nothing about it,” cried Robert, snappishly—for when a man is hungry, he not only dislikes contradiction himself, but, invariably, is liberal with it to others. “If a man simpers and whispers, and makes a few pretty—pretty speeches to *you* women, you set him down, forsooth, as very genteel—though he never pays a bill—if he can help it—is supercilious to his equals—and keeps a whole party waiting for dinner. Plague take such

gentility, say I. Elizabeth, I shall ring the bell for dinner.”

He did as he said, whilst his wife sat ruffling up and swelling with indignation at his retort. Determined not to hear her he walked away and stationed himself at the window, which commanded a view of the road. She, not able to address him, and resolved he should know her opinion, audibly exclaimed—to her neighbour—that she *did* know what gentility was, for she had seen a great of genteel company at Sir Thomas’s—and that great allowances were to be made for young men who were always wild and eccentric creatures.

Emma, who heard all this, could not help mentally considering where those allowances were to cease, since Mrs. Watson did not seem disposed to make them for her husband—though, in her judgment he seemed the person most entitled to claim them. Perhaps he had outgrown his right—or exhausted his share—possibly, the title to them ceased at marriage—or, may be, his

wife alone was not called on to accommodate him in that way. In the present instance, as she was remarkably hungry, she was glad Robert carried his point, and she walked into dinner with not one degree less of pleasure, because Mr. Musgrove was not there.

A dinner party, like the present, was not likely to be productive of much that could be called conversation. Mr. Robinson contradicted Mr. Martin about the laws concerning poor-rates; and, after being meekly yielded to by that worthy divine, found himself in his turn, pronounced perfectly misinformed, and laboring under an erroneous impression by his good friend, Robert Watson—who just allowed him to go on long enough on a subject of which he was ignorant, to give himself an opportunity of triumphing over him.

Just as Mr. Robinson was beginning to look very purple and red, and to glance at his wife to see how *she* looked—and just as poor, humble, meek, Mrs. Robinson was hur-

riedly talking nonsense to Emma about green peas, in order to shew that she did not notice her master's defeat, the door opened and Tom Musgrove bustled into the room.

"Beg ten thousand pardons, Miss Watson," cried he, ostentatiously parading up to her, "But, upon my word and honor, I could *not* get here sooner."

("Whose fault was that?" muttered Robert.)

"Can't think how it happened."

("Only because you started too late.")

"I am excessively sorry—glad you didn't think it necessary to wait."

("Confound the puppy—does he think we are an hour eating our soup.")

"Pray dont make any difference for me. I dare say I can make a dinner of what I see, The mutton, no doubt, as good cold as hot."

("Good enough for you, any way.")

"Pray don't send for the soup again! It is not in the least necessary .

“ Well, since you are so kind as to say so,” said Elizabeth, simply, “ I will let you do as you please—I dare say the soup will not be very good now—and it’s not pleasant, I know, to have it back ! Simson is handing you a chair—pray sit down ;” and as she spoke—the waiter, who was no other than the parish clerk, acting for the night in this capacity, thrust a chair against Mr. Musgrove’s legs with such zeal, as very nearly upset him, and quite caused him to jog Mrs. Steady’s elbow as she was in the act of lifting a glass to her lips, much to the damage of her respectable grey silk gown. When things come to the worst, they must mend—so says the proverb—and the company found it true on this occasion, so far as the disagreeable noise and bustle of his entrance was concerned. But this was not the case with Tom himself—who, really chilled and hungry, sat down to only half a dinner, more than half cold—and whose vanity compelled him to abstain even from what

was yet before him, lest he should be supposed guilty of the vulgarity of having an appetite. Had the struggles of his mind been exposed, perhaps, even Emma might have pitied him—or, at least, have admired the heroic constancy with which he sacrificed himself at the shrine of fashionable indifference. Unknown and unnoticed, however, were the efforts of his self-denial, and like modest worth, or unpatronised genius, they found their only reward in the internal satisfaction of his mind. As, however, he was a talker by profession, and always inclined to lead in conversation, their party gained much in liveliness, by the addition of his society. He flattered Mr. Watson — joked with Elizabeth — quizzed Mrs. Steady—and threw admiring glances at Emma, with laudable mirth and perseverance. Mrs. Robinson was soothed — Robert Watson silenced — and Mr. Martin aroused by his jocularities—whilst poor Mrs. Robinson was actually able to finish her dinner in tolerable comfort, so

much was her husband's brow cleared from the threatened storm, which had before alarmed her.

With secret weariness, Emma watched for the signal to withdraw from the dinner-table, but Elizabeth was too much entertained to be at all in a hurry to rise, and it was, at length, to Mrs. Robert Watson that her thanks for a release were due.

Emma almost forgave her assumption on the occasion, in consideration of the beneficial effects arising from it. It was in vain, however, to hope that release from weariness would follow a secession from the dinner-table; everything seemed so intolerably dull, that she was enraged with herself for her own stupidity, feeling convinced that the want of interest in all around her must arise from too much self-engrossment; she tried accordingly to school herself into listening to the platitudes of Mrs. Steady, or the boastings of her sister-in-law with something like attention; but she tried in vain; her mind was

continually wandering away to some distant subject, or was only recalled to the objects present, to calculate the number of minutes before the probable time of their departure. She did not doubt their being all amiable and excellent persons; but they certainly were not interesting characters; Mrs. Steady, in particular, next whom she was seated, seemed much fitter to knit stockings or make jam, than to keep up an intellectual conversation.

The weariest evenings, however, have an end: and this, like all others, terminated at last. Whist and loo—even the supper itself—were all finished; and when Mr. Martin had succeeded in putting on Robert's great coat; and secured, instead of his own, the old clerk's hat, which had been carefully hidden behind the door, he, the last of the party, disappeared, and Emma stole away without waiting to hear her brother Robert's animadversions on the dinner.

The succeeding day was much too wet

and stormy to allow any of the females the relief of change of air and scene ; but Emma, in the stronghold of her father's apartment, felt less disturbed than she could have expected. If there was storm abroad, there was anything but fair weather within the house. Mrs. Watson was affronted with her husband, and revenged herself by praising Tom Musgrove, and indulging in severe strictures on those whose birth and early education incapacitated them from judging of manners and fashion. These refined and elegant inuendos had all the effect she could desire—irritating her husband the more, because he could not treat them as personal and offensive, without at the same time admitting the implied inferiority of his situation in life, and opportunities of information and improvement. Accordingly, he could only testify his extreme displeasure by a general crossness to all around him, never speaking except when an opportunity to say something disagreeable presented itself. The

novelty of such a domestic scene, by no means gave it any charms in Emma's eyes, and she could not help considering that if Jane was annoyed by her husband's temper, it would, at least, be wiser to try to soothe and amend it, than, by irritating his infirmity, encrease the source of her own discomfort. The pleasure of fretting and galling any one, was beyond her comprehension, requiring abilities and understanding, similar to those of her sister-in-law, properly to appreciate.

Compared with this scene of strife, her father's company was perfect happiness, and she delighted in burying her own discomforts in a volume of Shakspeare, or Boswell's delightful reminiscences of his idol.

Yet Elizabeth seemed really to regret that the visit was so short, and tried, though vainly, to persuade both her brother and his wife to prolong their stay.

Robert was determined to go on Saturday; and Jane, who knew it would be

vain to oppose him, wisely took her part with a good grace, and resolved to make it appear to be her own free will likewise.

“It is not the slightest use to press me, Elizabeth,” he said, with more truth than graciousness; “you know I can be a very determined character when I please. I flatter myself, I have as much firmness and decision of mind, as any woman in England. When I have taken a resolution, I *have* taken it.”

“But why take this resolution, Jane; if Robert must go to business, why not stay here by yourself, and let us have a little time to enjoy your society.”

“It is very strange,” said the lady, affecting to laugh, and turning to Emma, “I always have such extreme difficulty in getting away from this sister of yours. Indeed, I may say the same of all, or most of my friends. ‘My dear Mrs. Watson, do come!’ writes one. ‘My dearest friend, you must stay’ cries another. I am positively torn to pieces between them all. My

sweet friend Lady Browning was just the same when I was with her at Clifton—upon my word, it's quite distressing."

Emma was saved the trouble of answering by Elizabeth again interposing.

"You would have no trouble at all if you would only yield now—there is nothing to prevent you."

"My dear Elizabeth, you who are not a wife and a mother can little understand the feelings of one filling such a doubly responsible situation. I am absolutely dying to get back to my little darling Marianne."

"What a pity that you could not bring her," said Elizabeth; "but still, I dare say, she could do very well without you for a day or two more."

Before Mrs. Watson had time to answer, her husband returned to the parlour.

"I have been trying to persuade Jane to prolong her visit, Robert; I do so wish you could both remain."

"It's no use to bother, Elizabeth," re-

plied he, roughly; "I cannot stay, and Jane shall not, and there's an end of it."

"Well, I can only say I am very sorry; I am sure we shall be dreadfully dull when you are gone."

Even this prospect caused no relenting in the heart of the obdurate Robert, who still persisted in his plan, perhaps, with the more zest because he delighted in tormenting both his wife and sisters.

"When shall you come and see us at Croydon, Elizabeth?" said her sister-in-law, after a short pause; "there are several things I want very much to show you. You should see the curtains—the new curtains in the drawing-room—they look so handsome—all my choice: it is not everybody who can choose curtains to advantage—it requires great tact and judgment."

"It does not require any marvellous judgment to empty a husband's purse, guessing from the wonderful facility some ladies of my acquaintance display," growled

Robert, from behind the Weekly London Newspaper, which his father took in second-hand. "Positively, this paper is a fortnight old: what a place—I saw it before I left Croydon—one might as well be buried alive!"

During this soliloquy, Elizabeth without listening in the least to her brother, was eagerly replying to Mrs. Robert's offer.

You are extremely kind Jane, to give me such pleasure; you know there is nothing I should like better, but I must not think of it—indeed I must not. I do not think my father would like my leaving home whilst he is so ill. Margaret is so useless a housekeeper, and hates the trouble so much—and Emma being the youngest, perhaps it would not do: if Pen were at home, it would be different: she makes a capital housekeeper, and she amuses my father when he is well too—I think when Pen comes back, I think I might be tempted."

"I should think our house might offer a

very pleasant change to any young lady shut up so much as you are in this miserable place. I am sure most of my friends are more anxious to stay than go."

"Oh, it is not that I doubt the pleasure," replied Elizabeth; "it would be a great treat to me, I am sure. But you must not be angry at my refusing now."

"Angry! I am not a person to be angry about trifles—it is not my way to fret or take on, I leave that for those who have no other way of showing their dignity but by growling at everything. People blessed with my birth and education need not resort to such pitiful means to look grand and important."

Emma sighed many times to see the temper of her brother so uncomfortably irritable, and grieved again and again in secret, over the destruction of some of her most fondly cherished hopes. All her life she had wished for fraternal affection; much as she had loved her uncle and aunt, she had always wished to know and love her brothers

and sisters. The vain wishes she had expended on this subject now rose up to haunt her memory with the thought that she had been ungratefully slighting the good she had enjoyed, for the sake of unknown objects which still evaded her. True she was now acquainted with five members of her family; but of these how little there was to attach, in the three last met, she hardly liked to own even to herself. Robert was surly, Jane conceited, Margaret fretful—and all seemed self-occupied. She tried to check these thoughts, she was shocked at her own wickedness in conceiving such things, but the feeling was there, even when not clothed in words, and she could not eradicate it.

Elizabeth she dearly loved already, but from what she heard, she fancied Penelope would not be very agreeable—and her last hope was in Sam. If he would only love her—be a friend, a companion to her—she still flattered herself this was possible, for Elizabeth certainly seemed to like him, and

one letter of his, which Emma had heard, gave her a favorable impression of his character. With the fond idea of being loved by one brother at least, at some future time, Emma saw her eldest brother and his wife depart without any of the regret which afflicted both her other sisters, having strong internal convictions that the house would be now more peaceable.

CHAPTER VI.

“WHAT are you going to do this morning, Elizabeth?” inquired Margaret in a voice between langour and peevishness.

“Oh, I have a hundred things to do,” cried Miss Watson, turning from the window where she had watched her brother and his wife drive off. “I must go and see about helping Nanny put away the best china and glass, and I must pin up the curtains, and put by all the things in the best bed-room—which were had out for

Jane's use; and I want to try that receipt she gave me for a pudding for my father—and fifty other things beside.”

“Then you will not think of walking, I presume; shall you Emma?”

“I am not sure,” replied she, “is it not very dirty!”

“Good gracious, Emma!” cried Margaret sharply, “I hope you are not such a fine lady as to mind stepping out in a little mud, or what is to become of me—I cannot bear walking alone, and Elizabeth is sure to be busy when I want her company.”

“Perhaps,” said Emma gently, rather afraid of giving offence by suggesting so evident a duty, “if we were to help Elizabeth, she would have done in time to join you and enjoy the fine weather.”

“I don't suppose she wants us a bit,” cried Margaret again.

“Thank you, Emma,” replied her eldest sister, without listening to Margaret, “but do not put off your walk on my account, I am used to these things, and mind the

trouble no more than you do threading your needle, or finding your place in a book," and taking her key-basket from the table, she left the room.

"There, I told you so," said Margaret immediately, "I knew Elizabeth disdains all assistance, and hates to be interfered with in her housekeeping: she is as jealous of her authority as possible, and I believe would rather go through any trouble herself, than allow us to share it for half an hour. Now just make haste, do, and put your pelisse on; I like the finest part of the day."

Emma still hesitated—

"I am not sure that I can go with you—perhaps my father may want me."

"My father want you!" repeated Margaret in a tone of astonishment, and with a look of surprise and incredulity, which Emma thought the announcement did not justify, "why what in all the world should he want *you* for?"

"I read to him a great deal," replied

Emma colouring, lest her sister should suppose she meant to suggest a comparison between their relative conduct ; for Margaret in general acted as if her father and his comfort were the objects of the slightest importance to her.

“What a bore that must be,” continued Margaret ; “at least it is to me, if not to you,” added she, as Emma exclaimed at the idea—“for now you have that as an excuse for not walking with me. I know what it is, you don’t want to come—and you might just as well say so at once, and not worry me by all these put offs.”

“Indeed I shall be very happy to walk with you,” said Emma, in a soothing tone, “if I my father can spare me ; I will just run up and see, and if so, we can go directly.”

Mr. Watson happened to be occupied by letters of business, in which he did not need Emma’s help, and accordingly the sisters set off together. They took the road towards the town, Margaret saying nothing

as to their object, and Emma making no enquiries. Indeed it did not occur to her that her sister had any other motive for walking than the desire of air and exercise.

“ I have hardly had time to talk to you, Emma, since I came home; but the fact is, Jane is so fond of me, that when we are together she seldom can spare me ten minutes. She is an amazingly clever woman, I assure you, and one of the best judges of character and manners I ever saw.”

This assertion, though Emma believed it might be perfectly true, did not convey to her mind precisely the idea which Margaret expected; and it rather convinced her of the narrow circle in which her sister had always moved, than the depth of Mrs. Robert's penetration, or the extent of Margaret's own virtues. She did not, however, dissent from the praise, and her sister went on complacently.

“ I am sure, Emma you must be struck with Tom Musgrove's manners—is he not

delightful?" enquired she, when her dissertation on Croydon was ended.

"I cannot say that I admire him at all," replied Emma firmly.

"Not admire him!" cried Margaret, for a moment aghast at such heresy—then recollecting herself, she added, "ah, I suppose you mean he did not admire *you*—he did not dance with you at the ball I know; I dare say, too, he was not in spirits—if I had been there it would have been different; if you knew him as well as I do, and had received as much attention from him, and knew what he thought of yourself as I do, you would see him with very different eyes."

"I shall be quite satisfied to view him always with as much indifference as I do now," said Emma, "and I trust, even if his manners should improve, or my taste alter, I shall be able to look on him without causing you any anxiety by excessive admiration. Elizabeth tells me he has made sad inroads on the peace of most young

ladies hereabouts; I hope he will spare me, as I suppose I must not flatter myself with being wiser or steadier than other girls."

"Elizabeth only says so from jealousy," cried Margaret indignantly, "he never paid her any attentions, and so—but good gracious, Emma," added she, interrupting herself and looking behind, "there he is coming, and some others with him—who can they be, only one wears a red coat—I did not expect them so soon."

"Did you expect him at all?" said Emma, colouring with astonishment—"Is it possible you walked here to meet him?"

"Well, and where's the harm if I did—I wish you would just look at those other two gentlemen, and tell me if you know who they are!"

"Indeed," replied Emma, vexed and embarrassed, "I do not like to look round in that way; it does not seem—at least I have been told it is not lady-like to turn round and stare at people—but, Margaret, is it

really the case, that you came here with this view?"

"Pooh, pooh, how can you be so tiresome, didn't you know as well as me, that the hounds were to meet at Ashley Lodge—I thought most likely Tom Musgrove would come this way, it is his direct road; but I wish I could make out who it is with him; they are just putting their horses into a trot—I declare I believe it is Lord Osborne and Mr. Howard—how tiresome now—for Tom will not stop when Lord Osborne is there—how very provoking!"

"If I had known this," said Emma blushing painfully, "nothing would have persuaded me to come this way—they will think we did it to meet them—"

The gentlemen were now come so near, that Emma's concluding words were lost in the noise produced by the sharp trot of several horses. She was thinking rather uncomfortably about what Mr. Howard would think, and whether *he* would suppose she had walked out to throw herself in

Lord Osborne's way, when the gentlemen suddenly drew up beside the high, narrow foot-path on which the sisters were walking.

"Miss Emma Watson," cried Lord Osborne, as he threw himself from his horse, which he hastily resigned to the groom, "by Jove! how lucky I am to have come this way—so you are come out to see the hounds throw off? I am so glad to have met you."

Tom Musgrove dismounted in imitation of his noble friend; but, as the path only admitted two, he was obliged to draw back—and, whilst Lord Osborne walked by the side of Emma, Tom was exposed, without defence, to the appealing glances and soft whispers of Margaret. Emma saw, with a sort of concern, which she could not exactly analyse, that Mr. Howard remained on horseback, and only acknowledged his former partner by a bow, much colder and more formal than his reminiscences at the visitation had led her to expect.

Whilst she was wondering at the change, her companion was trying to be as agreeable as nature would allow him, and she could almost have laughed outright at the air of deference and attention with which the dashing Tom Musgrove listened to his lordship's remarks, and confirmed any of his statements which required support. Thus they had walked for more than five minutes, when they reached a bend of the road, where another branch of the lane opened to them, which Emma knew would lead them almost directly home.

"Margaret," said she, turning to her sister, "I think we had better return this way, we may, perhaps, be wanted at home before we can reach it."

"I am sure I am quite ready to go," said Margaret, apparently on the point of bursting into tears of spite and envy at finding it useless to attempt to fix Tom's attention on herself.

"I thought you were come here on purpose to see the hounds throw off," said Lord

Osborne to Emma, "and what's the use of going home before you reach the cover."

"Indeed you were mistaken, my lord," replied Emma calmly, but decidedly; "for I was not aware till we saw you, that the hounds met in this neighbourhood!"

"Well, but do come on now, you are so near—my sister and Miss Carr are to be there, and I want to introduce you to them."

"Your lordship must be perfectly aware that what you propose is impossible," replied Emma, "I have no claim to intrude on Miss Osborne's notice, and she would, probably, be far more surprised than pleased by such an extraordinary step."

"No, indeed, on my honor, my sister wishes to know you—Tom Musgrove knows what she said about it last night—" looking over his shoulder at his friend, but going on speaking too eagerly to allow time for more than a simple assent from Tom. "I believe I was wrong in what I said,

which, I suppose, is what you mean, I want to introduce my sister to you—is that right?” Emma could not quite control a smile; “so now you will just come on with us, without stopping here any longer.”

“I am much obliged to you, my lord; but, indeed, I cannot comply with your request; and as Miss Osborne would not be expecting to meet us to-day, she will experience no disappointment.”

Very reluctantly the young nobleman was obliged to give up his proposition; and, as they rode way, he suddenly turned towards Tom Musgrove, after some minutes' silence, and exclaimed :

“I say, Musgrove, how is it you manage with women to make them worship you so—Emma Watson is the only girl I ever *tried* to please, and she seems to delight in refusing everything I propose. I can make no way with her.”

Tom's self-complacency was very near betraying him into a serious blunder at this speech; for he was on the point of

assenting to the proposition that he was more successful in making fools of young women than Lord Osborne. Fortunately, he recollected in time, that however agreeable a strenuous support to his lordship's opinions might be under ordinary circumstances, there were occasions when a well turned negative was far more flattering. Lord Osborne, like many other people, might depreciate himself—but he could not wish his friends to take the same view of the subject; Musgrove, therefore, judiciously replied, that Miss Emma Watson had treated him precisely the same, from which he concluded it was her way.

The sisters, in the meantime, were pursuing their path homewards, whilst Margaret was raining questions on Emma as to the commencement and progress of her acquaintance with Lord Osborne,—an event which seemed to her so very astonishing, as only to be surpassed by the cool and com-

posed manner with which Emma treated the affair.

Tom Musgrove's intimacy at Osborne Castle, had always greatly elevated his importance in her eyes; yet here was her own sister, who not only had walked side by side with the peer himself, but had positively refused to accompany him farther, in spite of his entreaties; and she now wound it all up by coolly declaring, that she thought Lord Osborne very far from an agreeable young man, and had no wish to see more of him. Emma was a perfect enigma to her sister, and but for a feeling of awe, which such exalted acquaintance had impressed on her mind, Margaret would have railed at her for her refusal to walk further. She was silently pondering on these extraordinary circumstances, when she was roused by the angry bark of a fierce dog—which rushing from the farm-yard, took up a position in the centre of the way, and seemed determined to dispute the passage.

Margaret, screaming aloud, turned to run away, and Emma's first impulse was to follow her example; but a moment's consideration checked her, and she attempted to soothe or overcome the animal by speaking gently, and looking fixedly at him. She was so far successful, that his bark sunk into a low irritable growl, and Emma profited by the comparative silence to address a man in the farm-yard, and beg him to call back the dog.

"He woant hurt thee, Missus," was the reply of the countryman, who seemed, in reality, rather amused at the fright of the young ladies.

"But my sister is afraid to pass him," said Emma, imploringly, looking round at Margaret who was standing at the distance of a hundred yards, and evidently prepared again to take flight at the smallest aggressive movement of the enemy.

"Thy sister must jist make up her moinde to pass as other foalk do—unless

you chose to go athert the field yonder, to get out of him's way."

"Athert the field," Emma concluded they must go, as Margaret would not advance; and she was about reluctantly to turn back, when the sound of horse's hoofs was heard, and the next moment Mr. Howard appeared advancing towards them. A glance shewed him the dilemma in which the ladies were placed, and he was as quick in overcoming as in comprehending their difficulties. A well aimed blow of his whip sent the aggressor yelping to his kennel, and a sharp reproof to his master followed, for not interfering in their favour, accompanied with a hint about the necessity of confining his dog, if he did not wish to have it indicted.

Mr. Howard was too well known for his word to be disputed or his reproofs resented; the farmer promised it should not happen again—peace was restored, and under Mr. Howard's protection, even Margaret ventured to pass.

“I thought you were going to hunt,” said Emma, in reply to his offer to see them safely out of reach of their terrible foe. Mr. Howard said he had only ridden out for pleasure, not for so important and imperative a business as fox-hunting: it was evident, however, that he considered walking with the Miss Watsons quite as pleasant as riding, and that he was in no hurry to remount.

“Would you allow my sister to do herself the honour of calling on you?” said he, presently; “your kindness to her little boy has quite captivated her, and Charles is as anxious as herself to carry on the acquaintance so happily begun. She has been ill since the assembly or the offer would have been made sooner.”

Emma coloured highly, but from very pleasurable feelings at this speech, and readily professed that it would give her great pleasure to become better acquainted both with Charles and his mother.

“I was almost afraid to propose it,”

said Mr. Howard, "when I heard the bad success of Lord Osborne's negotiation for a similar point: you do not really mean to refuse Miss Osborne's overtures."

"They must be made in a different way," said Emma, "before I am tempted to accept them; or, indeed, to believe that anything more is intended than to make me look ridiculous."

"You do less than justice both to yourself and to my friends," said Mr. Howard, gently, "I assure you, the wish was really expressed by Miss Osborne; and though my pupil blundered in making it known, I am certain it was entirely from want of self-possession, not from want of respect."

Emma did not answer; she was trying to ascertain whether the gratified feeling she experienced, at the moment, arose from the wish ascribed to Miss Osborne, or the anxiety shown by Mr. Howard to set those wishes in a proper light.

A pause soon afterwards occurring in the conversation, Margaret seized the oppor-

tunity, and leaning past her sister, addressed Mr. Howard in an earnest and anxious manner—

“Is it really true, Mr. Howard, that Miss Carr is so very beautifully fair?”

“She is certainly very fair,” replied he, rather astonished at the question, “I do not know that I ever saw a whiter skin; but is it possible that her complexion can be a subject of discussion or interest in your village?”

“I do not know,” replied Margaret, not at all understanding him; “Mr. Musgrove is a great deal at the castle, is he not?”

“Yes often, I believe,” said Mr. Howard, quietly.

“I do not wonder at it—he must be a great favorite with the ladies, no doubt,” continued she; “I should think his manners must recommend him everywhere.”

“I fancy his intimacy at the castle is more owing to Lord Osborne’s partiality than that of his mother or sister,” said he, still in a reserved tone of voice, as if not

wishing to discuss the domestic circle of the Osbornes; yet there was a suppressed smile on his mouth, which Emma construed into amusement at the idea of Miss Osborne's admiring her brother's hanger-on; and she silently diverted herself with fancying the probable degree of esteem which his complaisance and flattery would win for him.

CHAPTER VII.

MR. HOWARD did not leave the girls until they had reached their own gate, and then with a quiet but decided assurance that he would soon bring his sister, he mounted his horse, and rode homewards.

“Well, Emma,” said Margaret, as they entered the parlour together, “I wish every body had your luck; I cannot see why I should not have such great friends, yet I dare say, I have been to fifty assemblies, and never was a bit the nearer knowing

Lord Osborne or any of his set—how you managed it, I am sure I cannot guess.”

“It was only because Emma is both good-natured and pretty,” said Elizabeth, looking up from the sofa-cover she was assiduously mending.

“Emma is not the first pretty girl who has been seen in those rooms, I believe,” said Margaret sharply; “and I should like to know what being good-natured has to do with it!”

“It made her offer to dance with little Charles Willis—and by that means please his uncle and mother; it was her kindness and good-nature did that.”

“No it was not; it was because she was so lucky as to sit next the boy; if she had been at the other end of the room, all the good-nature in the world would have been of no use—it was all her good luck.”

“And if you had sat next to him the whole evening, should you have thought of offering to be his partner, Margaret?” enquired Elizabeth.

“Very likely not—I hate dancing with boys. But I don’t understand how Emma got acquainted with Lord Osborne.”

“And I cannot at all comprehend what makes your head so full of the Osbornes this morning,” replied Elizabeth.

“Why we met them all this morning, and first there was Lord Osborne walking and talking with Emma, and then Mr. Howard—there never was anything like it—he came right up to the garden-gate before he left us.”

“Did he indeed!” cried Elizabeth. “Do you mean Lord Osborne?”

Margaret explained, but her account was so tinctured with jealousy that Elizabeth, curious and unsatisfied, ran up after Emma who had left the room at the commencement of this discussion, to ascertain the truth from her.

Even when Emma had related everything to her sister, it seemed almost incredible—that Lord Osborne should have proposed such an introduction, and Mr. Howard pro-

mised a visit from his sister, appeared more like events in a fairy tale than the sober realities of their every-day life.

“But why did you refuse the introduction, Emma?”

“What to Miss Osborne? Because I think such unequal acquaintances are very undesirable and not likely to compensate for the trouble which accompanies them, by any pleasure they can afford.”

“I believe in my heart, Emma, you are very proud,” said Elizabeth in a doubting, puzzled tone that almost made her sister laugh.

“Too proud to become a hanger-on of Miss Osborne’s, certainly,” answered she; “much too proud to be condescended to, and encouraged, or patronised, or anything of the sort.”

“Well if I had been you, I would have just seen what his lordship would do: suppose they had asked you up to the Castle—would you not have liked that?”

“No,” said Emma; “I should only in-

dulge in luxuries which would make my home uncomfortable from the contrast, or perhaps become envious from comparing their state with my own. But I cannot imagine the option will be given me: unless Miss Osborne seeks me, we shall not meet, for I shall certainly not throw myself in her way."

"Well I am less proud and less philosophical than you, Emma, and I own I would accept such an offer if it were made me, and be thankful for the respite from the disagreeables of home, however temporary it might be. I wonder whether Miss Osborne wishes it very much. But after all Emma, you mean to let Mrs. Willis visit you—where's your pride in that case?"

"Surely Elizabeth, you must see the difference," said Emma, coloring. "Mr. Howard and his sister are in our rank of life, though their intimacy at the castle gives them artificial consequence. There would be no condescension on their part,

and no obligation incurred by me, which a return visit would not fairly pay."

"Well, I wish I knew what day they would come," said Miss Watson, "for we could sit in the drawing-room, and not cover the sofa and carpets."

"Pray do not do anything of the sort," said Emma, in alarm; "I hope it will not be the only visit they will pay—and we cannot *always* sit in state to receive them; make friends of them, and receive them in parlour."

Elizabeth shook her head.

"You are very odd, Emma—what notions you have. I don't at all understand you yet."

It was very evident by the result, that Mr. Howard had not overstated his sister's anxiety to place her acquaintance with Emma on a footing which would secure its permanence and authorise an increase of intimacy; for the next Monday after making the request, the visitors arrived. Eli-

zabeth and Margaret were sitting together when they were announced—but the former immediately left the room to seek for Emma—although she would have been very glad if Margaret would have saved her the trouble. Margaret, however, was determined to see as much of these strangers from an unknown world, as she could, and consequently, would not stir. She was very anxious to improve the opportunity by immediately entering into conversation with Mr. Howard, but she could think of nothing to say, and it was to the sister that they were indebted for the introduction of a subject. Margaret, who had taken little notice of her at first—for she always found a difficulty in conversing with women, could not help feeling, in some degree, obliged by the well-bred manner in which she commenced some common topics of conversation.

“ My brother has been telling me of your adventures on Saturday with the dog,” said Mrs. Willis presently, “ I hope you suffered no further inconvenience from it.”

“Oh,” said Margaret, “I was dreadfully frightened; I believe, but for Mr. Howard’s interference, I should have fainted; I am very nervous, and I declare I would rather have remained there the whole night, than have ventured past the horrid animal.”

“My arrival there must be esteemed most fortunate,” said he, “but I own I am astonished at the rudeness of the man in the farm-yard, who contented himself with looking on.”

“Oh, he was a brute,” cried Margaret, “no better than the dog—but what else can you expect from boors like him. They have no sentiment or feeling.”

“I do not agree with you,” replied Mr. Howard, “I assure you, I have often been struck with instances of disinterested kindness and generosity amongst the labouring classes, which prove that they are endowed with excellent feelings.”

“They have no delicacy or sentiment,” said Margaret, “and without that they are uninteresting to me. I own my partiality

for the favorites of nature, the gentle and elegant in manner, the aristocratic in birth and breeding."

"Still I think you do our peasantry injustice, if you suppose them destitute of delicacy of feeling, because they have not a refined way of expressing their thoughts in words," replied Mr. Howard. "Their manners of course are uncultivated, and their habits are what you would call unrefined—and no one would wish they should be cursed with the desire for elegancies, which habit has rendered indispensable with us, but which must be unattainable to them; but the germs of generosity, gratitude, and self-sacrifice for the good of others, may be found in many a one who would be puzzled to express his ideas in words."

"I dare say that is very true," replied Margaret; "but I must say I think them very coarse and clownish; now and then one sees a pretty looking girl; but the men are all detestable."

"I have little to say for their manners

or persons," said Mr. Howard ; " but, I assure you, I have met with poetical though uncultivated minds amongst labouring men—the true poetry of nature."

"It must be very odd poetry expressed in such gothic language," said Margaret, laughing: as she had not the smallest poetical feeling herself, she could not comprehend what he meant when he talked of it, and concluded that the peasantry spoke in rhyme, or, at least, blank verse.

At this moment the entrance of the other young ladies cut short the discussion, and introduced a new subject. Charles, who had been standing by his mother, earnestly contemplating the crown of his hat, and drawing figures with his finger on the beaver, now looked up, all animation, as Emma kindly greeted him as her "first partner at her first ball." His mother's eyes sparkled almost as much as the little boy's, at her good-natured notice. Mr. Howard's admiration of her was less obvious, but, perhaps, not less sincere than

the others. A moment after, Mr. Watson entered the room: his gout was better, and allowed him to come down stairs.

Mr. Howard noticed that it was Emma who rolled his easy chair into the proper position, Emma, who arranged his footstool, who drew the curtain to exclude the glare of the wintry sun, placed the screen to ward off the draught from the door, and laid his spectacles, snuff-box, and writing-case on precisely the proper spots of the proper table next him. Elizabeth was conversing with her visitor, and Margaret never stirred on such occasions. Certainly Emma's exertions, at this time, were almost rendered useless by the zeal with which Mr. Howard seconded her movements. Mr. Watson's comforts were soon arranged in the most satisfactory manner, such as long habit had rendered indispensable to him, and when he had carefully adjusted his spectacles, and taken a survey of the room, he turned to Mr. Howard, and enquired, who

was that nice young woman talking to Elizabeth.

On being answered that it was his sister, he civilly apologised for not having known her, which, as he had never seen her before, he remarked, was not wonderful; but Elizabeth ought to have introduced him before he sat down, as really the gout made it extremely difficult to move across the room. Elizabeth did not think it necessary to justify herself by informing him, that it was only owing to the self-engrossment and bustle attending his progress and settlement in his arm-chair, that her attempt at an introduction had been thwarted; indeed, Miss Watson was so little used to such ceremonies as to have seized precisely the most inauspicious moment for speaking, and having been foiled in her first essay, sat down without trying again.

Mrs. Willis, however, made it all easy, and soothed Mr. Watson's discomposure at

such a breach of etiquette, by the good-natured and respectful manner in which she now addressed him.

Whilst they were sitting in pleasant chat, Tom Musgrove again appeared amongst them. Emma really began to hate the sight of him on Margaret's account, as her sister's manners whilst in his company, cost her many blushes; and her increase of fretfulness after his departure occasioned discomfort to the whole party. It was a great gratification to her to discover from Mr. Watson's manner, that he was very far from looking on Tom Musgrove as the amiable and elegant gentleman that he aspired to be considered, and she even fancied that her father did not receive him simply as an inoffensive guest; on the contrary, he seemed annoyed at his visit, and inclined to regard it as an intrusion.

'Well master Tom,' said he, "what foolish thing have you been doing lately?—breaking any more horses knees or dinner-engagements—your genius cannot have

been idle since I saw you last—let's hear all about it."

"No indeed sir," replied Tom; "I have been doing nothing worth chronicling, at least to such a *judge* as you. I have had my own little amusements, but they are not worth detailing. By the bye Howard, I dare say Osborne did not tell you how completely I beat him at Fives the other day: he's a good player too—but didn't I astonish him."

"Lord Osborne seldom entertains me with accounts of his sports, whether defeated or victorious," replied Mr. Howard, coolly.

"When you have the gout in your foot even twice as bad as I have," observed Mr. Watson, "it will be consolatory to you to remember that you could once beat Lord Osborne at Fives."

"Aye sir, I dare say I shall have my turn by-and-bye, I expect to have it early—Osborne tells me *his* father had it at five-

and-twenty. It's an aristocratic complaint."

"Unless you have reason to suppose the late Lord Osborne was *your* father likewise," resumed Mr. Watson drily, "I don't see what either his gout or his aristocracy have to do with you."

"Do you feel any symptoms already?" whispered Margaret; "you really ought to take care of yourself—who would be so much missed if you were laid up with that dreadful disorder! and who would you get to nurse you in your hours of suffering?"

"Oh I'll take care of myself, Miss Margaret," said he pointedly; "gout makes one a prisoner, which is bad—I hate all confinement, and bonds of every kind, especially fire-side bonds: freedom for me—freedom at home and abroad—perfect freedom. By the bye, Howard," continued he, breaking in upon a very agreeable conversation which that gentleman was carrying on aside with Emma, "I knew you were here when I came in, by that curious vehicle standing

at the door. Positively it must have belonged to your great grandfather—nobody more modern could have built such a conveyance!”

“One thing is certain,” said Mr. Watson, “Mr. Howard *had* a great grandfather to whom it might have belonged—it is more than every one can say!”

Tom rather winced at this observation, for as it was known, to those who possessed good memories, that his grandfather had ridden about the country on a donkey, whilst carrying on the lucrative business of a rag-merchant, it was no very great stretch of the imagination to conclude that his more remote ancestor had been equally humble in his means of travelling.

“Perhaps it is not the most elegant conveyance in the world,” replied its owner good-humouredly; “but it carries us very safely, and the most fashionable curriole would do no more.”

“Upon my word I must beg to have the refusal of it, if you can be tempted to part

with it, Howard, and I will send it to a museum somewhere, labelled the car of Cybele; I protest it puts me in mind of an old print of that machine, which belonged to an aunt of mine."

"Lord Osborne has promised to give me a new carriage when either he or I marry," said Mr. Howard; "and I mean to make mine serve till that event."

"And are you come wooing now in person or as proxy?" whispered Tom, quite loud enough for Emma to hear. "A good place this—one need not ask twice, I fancy."

"Mr. Musgrove," said Howard in his particularly quiet but decisive way, "you are as welcome to laugh at my carriage as you should be to use it, if it were necessary; but remember there are subjects on which jesting is indelicate, and places where it is insulting." He turned away as he spoke and addressed Mr. Watson, to give Emma's cheeks time to recover from the glow which

betrayed that she had heard more than was pleasant.

Tom looked a little foolish, and after a moment's hesitation, addressed an enquiry to Emma as to whether she had been walking that forenoon. He only gained a monosyllable in reply, and then Emma drawing little Charles towards her, began a confidential conversation with him on the subject of his garden and companions at school, and the comparative merits of base-ball and cricket. Tom was repulsed, so turning to Elizabeth, he cried :

“ Well I must be going, Miss Watson, for I have an engagement. I promised to meet Fred Simpson and Beauclerc and another fellow presently—so I must be off. They want my opinion about some greyhounds Beauclerc has taken a fancy to but wouldn't buy till I had had time to see them. They are monstrous good fellows, and must not be kept waiting. Great friends of Osborne's, I assure you.”

Nobody opposed his design : then turning with a softer tone and manner to Emma, he said,

“ Really I must go to school again and take lessons from my little friend, to learn from him the art of finding agreeable conversation. What is the secret, Charles?”

“ It is more easily explained than taught,” replied Emma, “unaffected good-humour, sincerity, and simplicity. That is all!”

Tom took himself off, and as the sound of his curricule wheels died away in the distance, Mr. Watson observed :

“ There goes a young man, who if he had had to work for his bread might have been a useful member of society. But unfortunately the father made a fortune, so the son can only make a fool of himself.”

CHAPTER VIII.

“I suppose some of you girls will be for going over to return Mrs. Willis’s visit,” said Mr. Watson to his daughters, the next day; “she’s a nice little woman so far as I saw, and I have no objection to your visiting her; but you must go to-morrow, if you go at all this week, for I cannot spare the horse after that day.”

“Well, Emma,” said Margaret directly, “I will drive you over to-morrow if you like—you don’t drive, I dare say!”

"I think," said Emma, "that Elizabeth ought to go, because as it is a first visit, and she is the eldest—it will seem more complimentary."

"Certainly," cried Elizabeth, who was quite as anxious as Margaret to pay the visit, "you and I, Emma, must go at all events."

"But then *I* can't," exclaimed Margaret, "and why am *I* to be left out? if Elizabeth goes, because *she* is eldest, I have the best right to go too, when Pen is away, for I am older than Emma, at all events."

"But as the visit was paid especially to Emma," rejoined Elizabeth, "it is quite impossible that she should give up to you. She *must* go."

"Oh, yes, every body must go but me, that is always the way, it's very hard."

"Would not the chaise hold three?" suggested Emma, anxious for a compromise, "Margaret is so slight, and I am not large, I am sure we could sit so."

"I dare say you could," replied her fa-

ther," but I can tell you, you would have to sit in the stable-yard if you did, for the old horse could not draw you, and should not make the attempt—no, no, if Margaret wants to go she may wait till next time—if you pay visits at all, you shall pay them properly.'

The consequence of this decision on the part of their father, was such an increase of fretfulness in Margaret for the rest of the day, as to make Emma inclined to think the society of her new acquaintance would be dearly bought at such a penalty. Elizabeth bore it with the indifference produced by long habit.

"It is no use minding her," said she to Emma, as they were undressing, that night; "she is always the same; if you give up one thing, she will quarrel about another; you can do no good to her by sacrificing every thing to her wishes, and you had much better take your own way when you can, and mind her crossness as little as possible."

Emma sighed at this assertion, but she sighed in vain; Margaret's ill-humour was as apparent next morning, and rather increased as the hour of setting off drew near. It was some consolation to her, however, to discover that the day was exceedingly cold, with a heavy canopy of clouds over head, and occasionally, slight sprinklings of snow, which promised any thing but a pleasant drive to her sisters. Wrapping themselves up as well as they could, they set off; but the ominous appearance of the sky rather increased than diminished; and before they came in sight of Osborne Castle, for the parsonage was within the park, a very heavy fall of snow overtook them. As their humble vehicle slowly progressed along, Elizabeth was earnestly hoping that none of the Osborne family would see them; she had never before reflected much on the difference in their rank and circumstances; but now, whilst driving along the road where *their* coach and four had so often passed, she

was mentally comparing her lot with Miss Osborne's, and it seemed almost presumption in her to come, as it were, in contact with such superior elegance and grandeur.

Emma's sensations were different; she felt that their equipage was suitable to their station, and need therefore cost her no blushes, as it gave her no concern. The wish to find the inhabitants of the parsonage at home, was uppermost in her thoughts—and the hope that they should ultimately return, without being buried in the snow, her principal object of anxiety.

In the former of these she was perfectly gratified; the neat and pretty-looking maid, who opened the door, announcing that both the master and mistress were within. Emma was struck with the air of comfort and tidiness in all she saw, possibly because it contrasted strongly with her father's house. It was owing to Mr. Watson's frequent illness perhaps, but at home she had observed so many things which appeared to require

a master's eye. The gate swinging on one hinge, the trees straggling over the paths, the wall round the stable-yard broken down, and a hundred other examples of neglect and disorder had met her eyes at home. How different it all was at Mr. Howard's! Even with the disadvantage of winter, and the consequent dreariness of aspect which a lawn and shrubbery at such a season must present—the neatness of the place conveyed an idea of comfort and taste.

The porch and steps were clean and white; and the little vestibule, through which they passed to the parlour, was ornamented by some fine myrtles and geraniums in pots, which combined with the well-arranged guns, fishing-rods, and similar objects to give an air at once elegant and pleasing to the eye, but not too studied for the daily habits of domestic life. The useful and the ornamental were happily blended, and Emma looked with great pleasure round her.

They found Mrs. Willis sitting alone, and were received by her with warmth and ease.

“It is very good, indeed, of you to come through such weather to see us,” said she, “I am sure you must be half frozen—what can I give you to make you comfortable.”

Her visitors assured her they needed nothing; which, however, was not strictly true, as Emma certainly required the presence of the brother to make her quite contented. This assurance did not satisfy the hospitality of their hostess, who persisted in ordering hot wine and water, and would not be satisfied without their eating something to keep prevent any ill effects from the cold, as she said.

They had not sat there many minutes, when Mr. Howard entered from his little study which faced the entrance. He had seen their arrival, but would not gratify his wishes of immediately presenting himself till he had ascertained that their horse was properly attended to, and the carriage placed

under cover, to shelter it from the now thickly descending snow.

Elizabeth looked round the room with surprise and admiration. It was not larger or better than their own—and the furniture was, apparently, neither more expensive, nor more plentiful—but there was an air which their sitting-room never had. Instead of the old discoloured engravings of bishops with wonderful wigs, or gentlemen in broad-tailed coats, and flapped waistcoats, with their black frames, and dull, dusty glasses, which adorned the walls of their usual sitting-room at home, there hung here a few beautiful copies from the well-known and most admired works of the Italian masters, which Mr. Howard had brought as the fruits of his tour with Lord Osborne. These appeared to Elizabeth far more cheerful than the dingy prints before mentioned, although the idea of objecting to the latter, had never before entered her head. There was a flower-stand with some pretty plants; an embroidery frame; a bird

cage with Charles's pet canary ; a set of bookshelves well-filled, and a comfortable fire. But she could not make out why the appearance of the room was so different from things at home. Perhaps one reason was, that the whole of the furniture, having been bought and arranged at the same time, harmonised together ; unlike the articles in her father's house, which having been picked up at different auctions in the neighbourhood, or purchased second-hand from the broker, appeared, when put together, ill-matched and out of place, however good in themselves the individual articles were. She wished she could learn the art of giving such an air to a room, but she feared she never should. These thoughts wandered through her mind during the intervals of her conversation with their hostess, mixed with occasional wonder that Emma should find so much to say, and say it all with so much ease to Mr. Howard ; for though Elizabeth could get on pretty well with Mrs. Willis, she still felt some degree of awe

towards Mr. Howard himself ; a man who taught young Lord Osborne, and played at cards with his mother. Emma, evidently undeterred by such considerations, or rather not considering the subject at all, kept up a very pleasant chat with him, though nothing was said by either particularly deserving to be recorded. Half an hour passed rapidly, but when the sisters, after glancing at each other as a signal for departure, began to look rather anxiously at the weather, they found that it had changed decidedly for the worse since their entrance, although their attentions had been too much engrossed to perceive it before. The heavy sky was discharging itself on the earth in a thick veil of snow, which entirely concealed the distance, and rapidly whitened all surrounding objects. So dense was the atmosphere, that it rather seemed as if the clouds had themselves suddenly descended and settled upon the earth, than as if they were merely dispensing their superfluous contents. The wind too, which had before

blown only in occasional gusts, was now almost incessant, and greatly increased in violence, and as their road lay eastward, they were certain of encountering it in full force. The whirlwinds of snow which it raised, threatened almost to smother unhappy travellers, and would have made it madness to attempt to face it.

“What can we do?” said Emma, as she contemplated the scene in some alarm; “do you think you could drive in such a storm, Elizabeth?”

“Oh, I should not mind venturing,” said Miss Watson, “but I am afraid for you; you know you had a cold this morning, and to encounter such a storm would make you worse.”

“Encounter the storm!” cried the brother and sister at once, “impossible, not to be mentioned or thought of, much less put in practice—they must wait a little while, if they wished *very much* to return home, and see what patience would produce; in case it did not mend, they might send a

message if they feared Mr. Watson would be uneasy—but indeed Mr. Howard thought they had better give up all idea of returning at once, and allow him immediately to dispatch some one to answer for their safety, to their father's house. But as to leaving the house during such a tempest, it was quite out of the question.”

With the most friendly warmth, every possible accommodation was placed at their disposal; every objection done away as soon as started; every difficulty proved to be a vain fancy of its originator. The idea of the addition to their circle at dinner, did not seem at all to discompose Mrs. Willis; and the minor arrangements, the things to be lent for their use and comfort, appeared rather to bring her positive enjoyment. In a short time, the young ladies felt themselves quite domesticated in the house; their cloaks and bonnets removed, their hair smoothed, and their thick boots exchanged, for comfortable slippers of their new friend, they found themselves again

seated comfortably in the pretty parlour—and, ere long, were busily employed in helping Mrs. Willis in the agreeable occupation of sewing certain little colored silk bags which Mr. Howard and Charles afterwards filled with deliciously scented pot-pourri, from the large china jar in the corner of the room. Now, their only subject of uneasiness besides the dread of giving too much trouble, was the fear that their father's comfort would suffer in their absence, as they knew only too well how little Margaret contributed towards his amusement, or sought to spare him trouble.

Dinner time came, and Elizabeth was surprised to find that, although in the vicinity of Osborne Castle, their hour of dining was no later than what she was accustomed to ; and still more surprised that the simple meal—the single joint, and the plain, but certainly well-made, pudding which followed it, was considered quite sufficient in itself, and needing no apologies. Not that she expected anything more ele-

gant or uncommon, much less wished for it, but she felt had *she* been the entertainer, she would, certainly, have regretted the absence of further luxuries. The hour of dusk which followed the dinner, was particularly agreeable, as they drew their chairs round the comfortable fire, and chatted with the easy good nature which such a situation and such a combination of circumstances is sure to promote. The man or woman who can be cross and disagreeable at such a moment, must either be cursed with an uncommonly perverse temper, or have eaten a great deal more than is good for the health. This was not the case with either of the five who formed this cheerful group—and Charles very freely expressed his extreme satisfaction at the turn events had taken; appealing to his uncle to confirm his assertion that nothing could be more delightful than the fact of the two Miss Watsons being forced to remain in the house, and to join in his hope that the snow would keep

them prisoners for a week to come. Mr. Howard readily assented to his view of their own good fortune in the turn events had taken, and only demurred to his wishes from the doubt whether the young ladies themselves would not find such a detention a severe penalty—in which case, he was sure, even Charles could not wish, for his own gratification, to inflict it on them.

“Oh, certainly not, if they did not like it,” cried Charles, “only I am sure Miss Emma, you are too good-natured to object to what would give us all so much pleasure.”

“If my opinion or wishes could make any difference to the snow, or serve to open the road, Charles, it would be worth while to form a deliberate decision,” said Emma, good naturedly; “but now I want you, in the meantime, to guess this riddle,” and she diverted his attention by proposing some charades and enigmas for his amusement.

The diversion soon occupied the whole party, and much mirth ensued at the variety and strange guesses which it gave rise to. Presently a note was brought to Mr. Howard, which after studying near a light for some time, he threw down on the table, and said:

“There, ladies, there is a riddle which I would almost defy you to read—look at it!”

His sister took it up.

“Oh! I see—pray Miss Watson can you read that name?” and she held it out to Elizabeth, who, with Emma, looked at it with great curiosity.

“Is that writing!” cried Emma, “and can any one expect it to be read; I do not understand a word, except the three first.”

“Yes,” said Elizabeth, “one can read that, ‘my dear Mr. Howard,’ but the rest appears as if the writer had dipped a stick in an ink bottle, and scribbled over the

paper at random—you do not mean to say, you have read it, Mr. Howard?”

“I made out its meaning,” said he, looking up from a writing-table, at a little distance, “and I am answering it at this moment.”

“Well, you must be much more clever than I am,” said Elizabeth, simply, “they are all hieroglyphics to me.”

“It is a note from Lady Osborne,” said Mrs. Willis, “I know her signature; but I am not sure that I could decipher more.”

“Lady Osborne!” cried Elizabeth, looking at it again, but this time with great respect, “do peeresses write in that way.”

“Not all, I trust, for the credit of the peerage,” replied Mr. Howard, “or, at least, for the comfort of their correspondents.”

“It is certainly a great misapplication of abilities,” observed Emma, coolly, “for

I am sure it must cost a person more trouble to produce such a scrawl than it would to write three legible letters."

"I have no doubt it has cost her ladyship some trouble, and I am certain it has put her to needless expense," said he, "for on one occasion, her steward sent an express to London to enquire the coming of a note he had received which was intended to announce her return home: they passed the man on the road, and consequently the housekeeper was taken by surprise; how angry she was at the blunder!"

"Well but, Edward, what is the subject of your present *billet-doux*, or is it a secret that you are answering in such a hurry?"

"It is only to invite me to the castle to-night, to make up their card-table, which I have refused," said he, as he gave his note to the servant and seated himself again.

"Ah, how glad I am," cried his sister, "such a night, to ask you out, though only across the park! The Miss Watson's com-

pany affords a sufficient apology even to Lady Osborne, I should think."

"It is a sufficient one to myself," said Mr. Howard, "Lady Osborne may be unable to calculate accurately what I gain by the refusal—but I know that I secure a pleasant party, and escape a dreadful walk, to say nothing of the tedium of the card-table itself; you see how deeply I am indebted to your presence, Miss Watson, which serves me as an excuse on this occasion."

"We always hear virtue is its own reward," said Emma, "and your hospitality to us is now repaid in kind; as you would not allow us to encounter the snow, it would have been unjust that you should be exposed to it yourself."

"Well, Edward, I must say, I should be glad if you had a living in some other part of the country—for you must know," turning to Elizabeth, "that the inhabitants of the castle are almost too near to be plea-

sant. We are under obligations which neither party can forget, and Edward is compelled to sacrifice a great deal of time, and suffer much occasional inconvenience from the whims of the great lady, which would be all obviated if our residence were fifty miles off. You have no idea how exacting she is; and if my brother were not one of the best-tempered men in the world we never could go on as well as we do."

Here was food for wonder to Elizabeth; after all then the Osbornes though noble were not perfect; and the Howards, with their nice house, comfortable income, and high connections had, like other people, their own peculiar grievances, and cherished those hopes of improving their lot, by some anticipated change, which form the principal charm of life to half the world.

"I owe much to Lady Osborne for kindness both of deed and of intention," said Mr. Howard seriously; "and I should be sorry either by word or act, to fail in the respect

which is her due. She always means kindly at least."

"It is quite right of you, Edward, to be careful how you express your opinion, but neither gallantry nor gratitude have the same claim on me. She always means kindly to herself, I dare say, and thinks she means so to us—but she is no judge of our comfort, and fancies because our rank is different, we have a different set of feelings likewise—"

"For shame, Clara," interrupted her brother, "you forget what you are saying, and the best thing for you is, that we should forget it too."

"No indeed," replied she smiling; "must she not suppose you endowed with an extraordinary indifference to cold, and a super-human energy of frame to be pleased at encountering such a storm as this? hark to to the wind!"

"Well, I am convinced, that were we removed from the vicinity of the Castle, as you so much desire, Clara, we should suffer

as much inconvenience from the loss of many comforts which they afford us now; and you would admit then, that the good and evil were more equally balanced than you are at present disposed to allow."

"We might not have quite so much game, Edward; Miss Osborne would not give me flowers, and we should not go to assemblies in their coach; but on the other hand, I should not be so plagued by our best maid marrying their groom, as Lucy is going to do next month, because the Osborne Arms will then be vacant; nor would the laundress tell me when I complained of her clear-starching, that she had always helped in my lady's laundry, and the housekeeper had been perfectly satisfied with her."

"But pray tell me," said Emma, "is there any reason for her ladyship's curiously illegible hand, has she lost any of her fingers, or did she never learn to write?"

"I assure you she would be surprised at your not admiring her writing," said

Mrs. Willis; "she piques herself on its peculiar and aristocratic beauty."

"I am sure," said Elizabeth, "I have often been punished for writing which was much better than that; the writing master at school would have groaned at such a prodigious waste of paper and ink."

"Nevertheless, it thoroughly attains the object at which she aims, to be unique," said Mr. Howard, "and I am sure she would be much surprised at hearing it was illegible; but she thinks a fair, flowing hand, in an Italian character, much more a round, distinct, and clear one, only fit for tradesmen's accounts or clergymen's sermons."

"She has the same taste in everything," said his sister; "that frightful little dog she is so fond of petting, and half the ornaments in the drawing-room have no value but in their singularity."

"And do her family inherit her tastes?" enquired Emma, "does her son, for instance, prefer the wonderful to the beautiful?"

Mr. Howard gave Emma an enquiring glance, which seemed intended to question the motive of her curiosity ; then answered rather gravely, that Lord Osborne's tastes and opinions were as yet unformed.

"But he is not insensible to the power of some kind of beauty," cried Elizabeth, looking archly at her sister ; "from what I have lately heard of him, I am certain he is not."

Why the subject of Lord Osborne's tastes should be disagreeable to Mr. Howard, Emma could not precisely comprehend, though she pondered long on the matter, but this short discussion was evidently followed by a certain coldness and restraint in his manner of addressing her, which puzzled and rather vexed her. It was not, however, shaken off during the rest of the evening, and the unpleasant sensation it produced, was only mitigated by his being persuaded to read aloud to them, and in this manner the rest of the evening was spent.

The weather the next morning did not offer any prospect of a release to the young ladies, and to say the truth they evidently bore the involuntary absence from home without suffering very acutely, if either their air of complacency or their lively conversation might be considered indicative of their feelings. Breakfast passed pleasantly away, and the ladies were quietly sitting together afterwards, when the door opened and Lord Osborne's head appeared.

"May I come in?" said he, standing with the door in his hand. "You look very comfortable."

"You will not disturb us, my lord," said Mrs. Willis gently but good-humouredly, "provided you have no dog with you."

He advanced and paid his compliments to the ladies, then turned to the fire.

"That's nice," said he; "you can't think how pleasant it is after the cold air;" then seating himself and holding out his feet to dry before the fire, he said to

Emma, "I heard you were snowed up here last night."

"Did you, my lord," said she very coolly.

"Yes; my mother *would* know who it was with Howard, and so I learnt, and I am to give you my sister's compliments, or love or something of the sort, and as soon as the road is swept she will come and see you."

Emma was rather embarrassed at this declaration; she did not wish for Miss Osborne's notice, and felt uncomfortably averse to her patronage; yet the declaration seemed to excite so little surprise or emotion of any kind on the part of her new friend that she began to think it might be a more common-place matter than she had anticipated. The feelings of the sisters were not at all alike, though the result was the same in each; they both shrank from any intercourse with Miss Osborne; Elizabeth because she feared their inferior style of living would shock and disgust her, or

perhaps excite her ridicule; Emma because she apprehended the superiority of her birth and fortune would lead the peer's daughter to expect a degree of complaisance and submission which Emma herself would only pay to superior talents or virtue; but when she saw the quiet ease with which Lord Osborne was received, and the indifference with which the announcement of his sister's intentions was listened to, she became better reconciled to her lot, and prepared to go through her share of the introduction with calmness.

After all, Miss Osborne, though a baron's daughter and living in a castle, might have the tastes which are to be found amongst the dwellers in parsonages—though she travelled in a coach and four, she might love variety and novelty as much as the driver of the humblest one-horse chaise, and the prospect of forming a new acquaintance might have many charms for her on a snowy day when her time would probably hang heavy on her hands.

“It's not such bad walking either as you

would think," said Lord Osborne to nobody, and in answer to nothing; "and the walk down here is screened from the wind; but you would be surprised to see how the snow has drifted in places: it will be impossible for you to get through the lanes to-day Miss Watson."

"We do not intend that they should attempt it," said their hostess, "until we have ascertained that the roads are perfectly practicable, it would be inhuman to turn them out."

A short silence ensued. Lord Osborne sat by the fire looking at Emma, who proceeded steadily with her work; presently Mrs. Willis commenced, or rather resumed a conversation with Elizabeth, for the entrance of his lordship had interrupted it, on the the best methods of rearing domestic poultry.

Gradually as Miss Watson became hardened to the consciousness of being listened to by Lord Osborne, her faculties returned; and though at his first entrance she could not

have told how young chickens should be fed, before the expiration of half an hour she was equal to imparting to her companion the deepest mysteries of the poultry yard.

Whilst they were thus sitting, quiet and composed, Charles Willis suddenly rushed into the room and took up his station close to Emma's work-table.

"Why, Charles," said Lord Osborne, "don't you see me—arn't you going to speak to me this morning," and he laid a firm grasp, as he spoke, on Charles's coat collar, and drew the boy towards himself.

"I beg your pardon, my lord, I really did not see you," replied Charles, twisting his person in the vain hope of eluding his lordship's grasp, and keeping his place.

"I say, Charles," continued the young man, "how comes it lessons are over so early this morning—a holiday—hey—or uncle lazy—I thought you never finished till noon?"

"Oh no, we have been very industrious,"

Charles answered; "we both worked as hard as we could to get lessons over because we wanted to come early into the drawing-room as the Miss Watsons were here."

"But you don't mean to say you like the Miss Watsons better than Latin grammar—or Greek verbs—that's impossible altogether."

Charles laughed.

"Are *you* so fond of the Latin grammar, my lord?" asked he, slyly.

"I! oh no; but then I learnt all mine long ago; and since I survived the flogging, I dare say it did me no harm. But now tell me," added he, in a whisper, quite distinct enough for every one in the room to hear, "was it you or your uncle who was in the greatest hurry: or does not he like the Miss Watsons as well as you, Charles?"

"Oh, I assure you, he was quite as anxious as myself—and I think he likes Miss Emma as much as I do," whispered Charles in reply.

Whether the deep colour in Emma's cheek, at that moment, was occasioned by this answer of Charles, or by vexation at an obstinate knot in her thread, which she vainly endeavoured to disentangle, was not exactly obvious to Lord Osborne's perceptions. He thought the effect, however, so very becoming as to regard her with great admiration, and his looks were intently fixed on her, when Mr. Howard entered the room.

The eager step and open, happy look with which he was advancing, seemed to meet an unexpected shock at the sight of his young pupil. His air was embarrassed as he paid him his compliments, and after standing for a moment, as if in hesitation, he drew a chair near Miss Watson and his sister, on the opposite side of the table to the others.

A pause of some minutes ensued: it appeared that Lord Osborne found sufficient amusement in contemplating the varying colour in Emma's cheeks, whilst Mr.

Howard was occupied in playing with a pencil he took from the table, and did not raise his eyes at all.

“It is not like your lordship’s usual aversion to cold,” said he, at length, “to venture out on foot in such a morning. I thought nothing could have tempted you to such an exertion.”

“One changes sometimes,” replied Lord Osborne, “and one can do anything with a sufficient motive—I mean to turn over a new leaf, as my nursery maids used to say—and you will hardly know me again.”

Another silence, during which his lordship crossed and uncrossed his legs repeatedly—then took up the poker and stirred the fire. Emma heartily wished him back at the castle: his looks fixed on her were very unpleasant; and she hoped that his departure would release Mr. Howard from the spell which appeared to overpower him, and restore his ordinary animation.

She had, however, long to wait for this desirable result; it was evident that the drawing-room at the parsonage presented

more charms to the young peer, than the castle halls, and he continued to sit in silent admiration of Emma's blushes long after Mr. Howard had risen in despair, and left the room.

The sound of the door bell about noon, brought some prospect of a change; eliciting from Mrs. Willis an exclamation of wonder, and from Lord Osborne an interjection—

“I'll bet anything that's my sister.”

He was right. Wrapt in a furred mantle which might almost have defied the cold of a Siberian winter, Miss Osborne made her entry, on purpose to call on Miss Emma Watson, as she declared immediately. Emma observed her with some curiosity. She was a small, young woman, with lively manners, a quick, dark eye, and good humoured expression. Quite pretty enough, considering her birth, to be called beautiful, though had she been without the advantages of rank, fashion and dress—had she, in fact, been a Miss Watson, and not a Miss Osborne, she would not, probably, have

been noticed a second time. She was extremely courteous and agreeable in her manners, chatting with volubility and animation, as if it was a relief to her to escape from the state apartments of her mother's house, to the unrestrained warmth and good-nature of the parsonage.

"Where's your brother to-day, Mrs. Willis," said she presently, "has he run away from me; does he fancy we are charged with lectures for his desertion of our drawing-room last night. He need not be afraid. *I think he was very excusable.*"

"He was here just now. I do not think his conscience seems very uneasy—he is probably engaged in some business at present—I will let him know you are here."

"Oh no, pray don't disturb him; I have too much regard for his credit, and the good of his parishioners. What should I say if my intrusion broke in on an argument, or put to flight a beautiful figure of speech. How could I answer for such mischief. Let him write his sermon in peace."

Mrs. Willis assented. Probably Miss Osborne did not expect she would, for she presently added :

“ I don't know, however, but that on the whole you had better summon him, because then he can give us his opinion on the proposal that I am charged to make, being nothing less than that you should *all* come and dine at the Castle this evening.”

It would not be easy for words to convey an accurate idea of the look and feelings of Elizabeth Watson on hearing this proposal. To say she was astonished, is to tell but a small part of her sensations. The idea that she should have lived to see the day which brought about such an invitation was so perfectly overwhelming, that she seemed to herself until that moment never to have been surprised before. But to accept it was impossible: she felt an instantaneous conviction that it must be refused; for besides not knowing how to conduct herself under such circumstances, she had no dress to go in. Their visit to the par-

sonage having been entirely unpremeditated, it followed, of course, that there had been no preparations made; their best dresses, inferior as they were to what the visitors at Osborne Castle might be expected to produce, were reposing in quietness in Elizabeth's wardrobe.

Miss Osborne's proposal was followed by a short, hesitating silence amongst those to whom it was addressed.

"Perhaps," cried she perceiving this, "you will like a moment's consideration. I do not wish to hurry for an answer. Pray deliberate on the case, Mrs. Willis, but if you can, persuade your friends to conclude their deliberations in our favour."

"I am afraid," said Elizabeth, urged by the desperate nature of her feelings to some immediate exertion, "I am afraid we cannot have the pleasure—do ourselves the honor I believe I ought to say—but indeed we were not prepared—we have no dress at all suitable for the occasion"—she stopped, afraid that she might have done wrong in exposing the real state of the case.

Miss Osborne looked surprised, as if the idea of not possessing a sufficient stock of gowns had never before entered her head.

“I am sorry there should be any difficulty,” she cried, “gowns that are good enough for Mrs. Willis and Mr. Howard, must surely be good enough for us. We shall not make the smallest objection to your coming as you are. You will be conferring on us a most important favour. You cannot imagine how miserably dull we find ourselves in this weather. Mama dozes over a fire-screen, and Miss Carr and I sit and look at each other, and long for a change of scene. Snow is always detestable, but at Osborne Castle it surpasses everything for deadening the faculties and damping the spirits. Come now, do think favourably of my request, how shall I dare to face Lady Osborne with a second refusal?”

“I hope her ladyship was not vexed at my brother’s refusal last night?” said Mrs. Willis, with a little anxiety.

“I will not say she was not disap-

pointed," replied Miss Osborne gaily, "we are so dreadfully dull and melancholy; but he has my full and entire forgiveness for his defalcation, on condition that he comes to-night to repair his errors, and brings you all with him."

Meantime Lord Osborne had edged his chair closer to Emma, and was in low tones pressing on her the request his sister had just made.

"Do come, you look too good-natured to say no—I am sure you must be monstrously obliging."—Emma shook her head and tried not to smile.—"And as to what your sister says about dress, that's nonsense; that is, I don't mean she talks nonsense, but it's foolish to care about dress—you look very nice—you always do—and we don't the least mind about your gown. * My mother and sister have such loads of fine clothes themselves, that depend upon it they will not care the least for seeing any more."

Emma thought this extremely probable, but yet it did not seem quite applicable to their case. How, indeed, could any young

lady be expected to derive consolation from the idea that her personal appearance could be a matter of total indifference to her companions. It was evident to Miss Osborne, that the ladies wished to discuss this question amongst themselves; she therefore dropped the subject, and after chatting good-naturedly on some indifferent topics, took her leave, with an assurance that if they decided in favour of the Castle, a carriage should be sent down to fetch them. She persuaded her brother to return with her, which was a particular relief to Emma, who had grown quite tired of his eyes.

Hardly was the house door closed on them, when Elizabeth drawing a long breath, exclaimed:

“Oh dear, Mrs. Willis, do tell me what we had better do, I am sure I would much rather refuse if we can, but then perhaps it would not be thought right—and I must say if I were not so frightened I should rather like to see the inside of the Castle, and how people go on there.”

“I do not think you need be much



alarmed," replied Mrs. Willis smiling good-humouredly, "you will survive it I dare say, if you make up your mind to go. Lady Osborne *is* rather stiff certainly, but though she does nothing to make herself agreeable, she is not unpleasant—not more so than a handsome piece of furniture—a picture, or anything of that sort. And I really think you would be more amused there than in our little drawing-room."

"But we have no dress fit for company," again urged Elizabeth.

"They are aware of the circumstances under which you came, and therefore must know you to be unprepared. I do not, therefore, think *that* need be an insurmountable objection. Your own inclination must decide it."

At this moment Mr. Howard re-entered the room. His sister immediately began to relate to him the fact of the visit and the invitation; but he cut her short by saying that he knew it; he had met Miss Osborne and her brother as they were leaving the house, and accompanied her part of

the way home. His eyes were turned on Emma as he spoke, and an idea which suddenly occurred to her relative to his acquaintance with the young lady, caused her a sensation that brought the blood to her cheeks. Why she should color and feel warm at the notion that he had any particular regard for Miss Osborne, she could not exactly decide. It certainly could not concern her in the least if he had, and she would have been very glad to have kept her looks and feelings under better regulation, she was so very much afraid that he would guess her thought. This was an alarm entirely without foundation, as far from rightly guessing what was passing in her mind, Mr. Howard's fancy went off in a totally different direction. He attributed her blushes to some sentiment connected with the brother, not the sister, and supposed her to be pleased with the consciousness of these attentions being meant for her. For his own part he felt considerable surprise that Miss Osborne should so directly and decidedly countenance her brother's ad-

miration. He had expected more pride from her.—Could he have heard the conversation that passed on the subject at Osborne Castle, he would have better understood the hidden machinery on which these matters turned.

“What makes you so anxious to cultivate an intimacy with those Watson girls,” said Miss Carr to her friend, when she heard her announce an intention of calling on them.

“I like the looks of Emma particularly,” replied the young lady addressed; “there is expression in her countenance, an air and manner in her motions which I admire.”

“And do you run after all the girls who have a little manner or expression, Rosa?” enquired her friend again, with something of superciliousness in her tone.

“I don’t like those who have not, Fanny—but there is more than this in my plan—I think Mr. Howard likes her.”

“Well, and what does that signify to you? what have you to do with Mr.

Howard's liking?" this question was accompanied with a sharp, interrogative look from Miss Carr, as if she strongly suspected her friend's motive.

"I have half a scruple about explaining to you, Fanny."

"Oh, pray throw it away then and explain at once. I am dying of curiosity to understand the motive of your manœuvres."

"I will tell you nothing whilst you look so much as if you think you understand all—your quizzical look provokes me to silence."

"And if you will not tell me, Rosa, I will just tell you what I think; listen—you think Mr. Howard admires Emma Watson—and you cultivate her acquaintance for the sake of thwarting their attachment. Is that worthy of you?"

"Worthy indeed," cried Miss Osborne, throwing back her head with an air of disdain. "I might justly retort your question—upon my word, I am highly flattered by your gracious opinion of me. No, if I do stoop to manœuvre, it is not to dishonor

our house, or to *promote* alliances unworthy of it. Now I will tell you my real motive—though positively even to you, I am half-ashamed of mentioning it. My mother—have you not observed—she is so very partial to—”

Miss Osborne paused in some confusion. Her friend looked puzzled.

“Partial to whom—to Emma Watson? I really don’t understand.”

“No, no, to Mr. Howard,” replied the blushing daughter, in a low tone; “and I would give the world to see him married and out of her way.”

“Very well—very reasonable,” said Miss Carr, coolly, twisting her fingers through her long ringlets. “But how does your patronising this Emma promise any particular progress to Mr. Howard’s passion? In my opinion, you had much better let them alone.”

“I don’t think so,” replied Miss Osborne, decisively; “the Watsons have always been considered as very low in rank amongst visitable people. The few we

know ourselves decidedly hold them cheaply—and I think it possible that, accustomed to superior society, Mr. Howard might hesitate a moment before throwing himself amongst a set so decidedly inferior to those with whom he is used to mix.”

“He does not seem to feel any such nicety, since his admiration has begun, and will, no doubt, prosper without your intervention. I still repeat, you had better let them alone.”

“But I have a great regard for Mr. Howard, and should like to be on good terms with his wife.”

“Wait till she is in existence then.”

“But if I slight her *now*, will she be more inclined to be sociable *then*?”

“You need not slight her—be civil if you like—but why seek her out unnecessarily?”

“Because I foresee that his marriage, whenever it takes place, will cause a *fracas*, and I should wish them both to feel they have a friend in me.”

“Well, it is an affair that concerns you

no doubt, much more nearly than me, and I cannot presume to dictate. But I think *all* manœuvring dangerous."

"Besides," continued Miss Osborne, changing the ground of her reasoning, "Emma Watson, in herself seems a nice conversable girl, and, I assure you, at Osborne Castle, when there is no party in the house, such an acquisition is not to be despised."

"Why, Rosa, you never spoke a word to her—how can you tell that she is conversable."

"Not from my own observation of course; but I can form some judgment from what Mrs. Willis and her brother have told us—"

"And your brother, too," said Miss Carr, with some emphasis; "he seems to be taking some trouble to make her acquaintance."

"Who, Osborne? yes, he admires her, I believe; but his is a very passive sort of admiration, not in the least likely to lead to any vehement results."

“Well, I can admit your being sometimes lonely as a motive for wishing for a country friend; but, if I do not think you make the selection with your usual judgment, you must forgive me.”

“I cannot imagine why you entertain such a prejudice against poor Emma Watson, Fanny; you cannot, surely, be jealous of her—are *you* in love with Mr. Howard—come—confess!”

“No,” replied Miss Carr, coloring deeply as she spoke.

The result of this conversation was that visit and invitation already related. Lady Osborne made no objection to her daughter’s proposal. Her card-table would be then certain to be filled, and Mr. Howard would have no excuse for absenting himself. Her pride did not stand in the way on this occasion—she considered every individual not belonging to the peerage to be so much beneath her, that the gradations amongst themselves were invisible to her exalted sight; and a step or two, more or less, made no difference. She had not, therefore, the

smallest inclination to oppose the admission of new spectators to her glory—and rather rejoiced in the idea of the envy and admiration to which her jewels, her equipages, and her general style of grandeur would give rise.

With these amiable motives, she allowed her daughter to do as she liked, and the only one who seemed at all discomposed by the circumstance, was Miss Carr, whose remonstrances, however, proved quite ineffectual.

CHAPTER IX.

To return to the party at the parsonage, whom we left discussing the point, Elizabeth suddenly turned to her sister and exclaimed,

“By the bye Emma, you have given no opinion on the subject—yet you are as much interested as the rest of us. What do you think of going—should you like it?”

“Yes, I think I should,” replied Emma honestly and boldly. “I like what I have seen of Miss Osborne better than I expected, and really have rather a curiosity to see the inside of the Castle.”

“Ah, Emma, I am glad you have come down from your proud indifference, and

condescended to be curious like the rest of us," cried her sister.

"Did you think I affected indifference, Elizabeth?"

"I suspected it. For my part I have no scruple in owning my wishes, and should like extremely to surprise Tom Musgrove by my acquaintance with the manners, amusements and ideas prevalent in Osborne Castle, of which he talks so much."

"Then I may conclude it a settled affair," observed Mrs. Willis; "and Charles shall run up to the Castle with the note immediately. That shall be his share of the amusement."

At six o'clock the party started from the Parsonage. Elizabeth in a flutter between curiosity and fear, which made her pleasure in the undertaking rather doubtful to herself. Emma would have thought more about it had she not been engrossed with meditations on the change in Mr. Howard's manners, which rather perplexed her. He had been different all the afternoon from

what he had appeared in the morning; his prolonged absence from their company seemed unaccordant with Charles's declaration of his haste to join them, and there was a coldness in his tone when he addressed *her*, quite at variance with his former warmth and frankness. This pained her; she was constantly fancying that she had done or said something to lessen herself in his esteem, but she could not imagine what it was. Occupied with these thoughts she scarcely noticed the grandeur of the Hall, the magnificent staircase, the elegance of the ante-rooms as they approached, and was only roused from her reverie by the overpowering blaze of light in the drawing-room. Lady Osborne was alone in the room, seated on a sofa from which she did not rise to receive them, but graciously extended her thin and richly jewelled hand to Mrs. Willis, and bowed courteously to her companions.

Overawed by her near approach to such magnificence, Elizabeth drew back rather hastily, and after nearly upsetting Emma

by inadvertently treading on her toe, she dropped into the chair which seemed most out of sight, and endeavoured to recover her breath and composure.

Lady Osborne desired the other ladies to find seats, and then observing that Mr. Howard likewise drew back, and seemed to meditate a retreat to one of the windows, she dropped the elegant screen she had been holding in her hand. It was not well managed, however; Mrs. Willis was so near that she restored her ladyship's screen before her brother had time to interfere. But Lady Osborne was not to be baffled, she addressed a few civil words to Mrs Willis, and then suddenly observed,

“ You have no footstool Mrs. Willis, take mine—I daresay Mr. Howard will bring me another.”

Thus appealed to the gentleman was forced to approach, and immediately with eager civility was offered a seat on the sofa by herself.

Emma meantime was contemplating their

hostess with some interest, and more wonder. Lady Osborne had been a celebrated beauty, and her dress showed that she had by no means given up all pretensions to her former claims. Jewels and flowers were mingled in her hair which was still remarkably abundant; her neck and shoulders were a good deal uncovered, her arms and hands were heavily hung with ornaments, and she smoothed down her rich dress with a hand which though thin was still white and delicate-looking. There was something in her manner to Mr. Howard which particularly struck Emma—a sort of consciousness and wish to attract and engage him, that seemed very much at variance with her age and station. Not that she was an old woman—Emma had learned from “The Peerage” that she was not more than forty-five, and she looked less. But she was the mother of a grown-up son and daughter, and the widow of a peer; and a grave and gentle deportment, stately but serene, would have seemed more becoming in Emma’s

eyes, and given her a higher idea of her character. She had not however very long to make these observations as Miss Osborne's entrance gave her another subject for her thoughts. This young lady presented a remarkable contrast to her mother, from the studied plainness of her dress. She was entirely without ornament, except some beautiful flowers, and had evidently sought in her toilette to assimilate her appearance as nearly as was suitable to what she knew her guests must present. She took a seat between the two strangers, and entered readily into conversation with Emma; but before many sentences had been exchanged, their party was completed by the appearance of Miss Carr at one door, as the young master of the house entered at another.

He paid his compliments to them all by a short bow, and a muttered, "Glad to see you," then walked towards his mother's sofa, and stationed himself by the end of it, nearest Emma, where leaning against the elbow, he could resume his apparently favorite amusement of staring at her face.

Miss Carr, meanwhile, had approached the fender, and stood fluttering over the fire for some minutes, then advancing nearer to Lady Osborne, addressed to her some trifling question, which diverted her attention from Mr. Howard, to his evident relief. He immediately rose, and resigned his seat in her favor. Lady Osborne looked displeased, but to that Miss Carr was indifferent, she had secured a position at Lord Osborne's elbow, which was her own object, and broken short her lady hostess's attempts at flirtation with the clergyman which she knew would please her friend.

Her position, however advantageous, was not long tenable: the summons to dinner was given before she had time to utter more than one remark to Lord Osborne, cutting off his answer, which, short as he usually made his replies, there was now no opportunity to utter. Lady Osborne rose in great state, and giving her hand to Mr. Howard, proceeded to the dining room, through a long range of ante-rooms, where large glasses were so arranged as to exhibit

before her, her stately figure, and glance back the lustre of her diamond ornaments. As Elizabeth and Emma followed Miss Osborne and her friend, they could not help wondering at the self-admiration which made it agreeable thus to see nothing but self.

“How dingy we look compared to her ladyship and Miss Carr,” whispered Elizabeth to her sister. “I really feel quite ashamed of myself.”

“I trust I shall be a little sheltered from her son’s eyes,” rejoined Emma, in a similar tone, “his stare is quite overpowering; why does he not, sometimes, look at you.”

“Thank you, I do not wish it—gracious—six footmen—what can they all find to do in waiting,” this ejaculation was uttered almost inaudibly—they having reached the dining-room, where Elizabeth was too much awed to speak.

Lady Osborne did not sit at the head of her own table, and her two young visitors were seated on either hand of Miss Osborne

on the opposite side of her ladyship. Immediately that she perceived how they were about to be arranged, Emma contrived to seat herself as far as possible from their host, and by that means became the neighbour of Mr. Howard. She fancied he perceived the object of her manœuvres, for a sort of half smile passed over his face, and he looked either amused or pleased, she could not tell which. He did not address her, however, and as Miss Osborne turned to converse with Elizabeth she sat for some time silent. But as dinner advanced, just as her ladyship was detailing to Mrs. Willis some events in the village which required superintendence, and whilst Miss Carr was making a lively attack on Lord Osborne—about his absence of mind during the dinner, Mr. Howard enquired whether her curiosity was gratified. Pleasure that he should once more resume a tone of friendship, brought a lively colour to her cheeks, and so sweet a smile to her lips, that he must have been very insensible to admiration of beauty, had he been able to resist

the attraction. He continued the conversation as long as Lady Osborne's narrative served as a screen to them, and though, when that drew to a close, he found himself compelled to transfer his attention to their hostess, the impressions left by his look and tone were so very pleasing, as quite to rescue the dinner from a charge of stupidity which Emma had previously been meditating to bring against it. It was lucky that she had this little diversion, for otherwise her share of amusement would have been small. There was not a great deal said at dinner, and of that little comparatively a small portion fell to her lot.

It was over however at last, and when they had reached the drawing-room to which they were ushered, in almost as much form as they left it, though their conductor was now only the groom of the chambers, Emma hoped she might find some little relief from insipidity: nor was she disappointed; whilst Lady Osborne was sipping coffee, and prosing to Mrs. Willis, her

daughter drew her younger guests into a smaller room, which she assured them was her own particular domain; here establishing themselves comfortably round the ample fire, they fell into a lively and pleasant chat, such as any three girls might be expected to do; presently they were joined by Miss Carr.

“Your lady-mother,” said she, “is so deep in village politics with Mrs. Willis, that I am sure I must be *de trop* there, and I have, therefore, absconded here.”

She seated herself as she spoke in the chimney corner on a low ottoman, and spreading out her hands to the fire; she said—

“Don’t let me stop you unless you were talking of me, Miss Emma Watson, it is your turn—what do you think?”

“Think of what?” enquired Emma, rather startled by the keen eyes fixed on her—it seemed always her fate to be stared at unmercifully.

“Think, oh, of anything—of Mr. How-

ward for instance—what do you think of him?”

“That he carves very well,” returned Emma laughing.

“Well, that is something—a good quality in the master of a house; I commend it seriously to your attention.”

“I should think the gentlemen would not sit very long,” observed Miss Osborne, “and when they come we must all adjourn to the drawing-room, for mama will wish to sit down to cards. I hope you can play cards.”

Her visitors assented, Elizabeth asserting that she was very fond of them.

“And you, Miss Emma Watson,” cried Miss Carr, “do you not delight in cards—you answer with a degree of coldness that speaks rather of indifference on the subject.”

“I can play if necessary,” replied Emma, “but there are many occupations I prefer.”

“But you shall not be obliged to make mar-

tyrs of yourselves,' said Miss Osborne good-humouredly. "If you prefer it you shall sit here, either or both of you, but we do not play high."

Nothing remarkable occurred during the rest of the evening; a dull, leaden state seemed to pervade everything, and both the Miss Watsons felt an inclination to yawn, which they dared not indulge in so august a presence. They were very glad when the time for taking leave arrived, and the enlivening bustle of putting on cloaks and fur boots quite aroused them. Lord Osborne looked on whilst Mr. Howard was wrapping up Emma, with a degree of attention which held out fair hopes of his soon learning such a lesson by heart.

"I shall come down and see you to-morrow," said he.

"It seems warmer to-night," observed Emma, "don't you think we are going to have a thaw? perhaps we may get home to-morrow."

"I hope you are not weary of us," said Mr. Howard, in a cordial voice; "if the

weather does not change till *we* wish it, we shall keep you prisoner some days yet."

"Thank you," said she—she wanted to say something more but did not know exactly what, and they reached the carriage before she had made up her mind.

The bright fire which was burning in the comfortable little drawing room at the parsonage, irresistably invited them to enter and draw round it, before separating for the night. Their drive had dispelled their sleepiness, and they were all four in good spirits: it was just the time, the situation, when reserve seems naturally cast aside, and friendly chat and the merry laugh go round unrestrained.

"Well, Miss Watson," said Mrs. Willis, "is your curiosity gratified? how do you like the Castle? are you envious of their state?"

"No, I think not," answered Elizabeth reflectingly, "there are some things I should like, but much that would be troublesome. I dare say Lady Osborne has no worry about housekeeping, but then *I* should feel

the responsibility of having so many dependent on me."

"And what part would you chose of her ladyship's manner of living?" asked Mr. Howard, "her jewels perhaps—or her six footmen?"

"Neither," replied Elizabeth, laughing a little; "I am used to wait on myself, and should feel it a great restraint to be obliged to wait whilst others waited on me. I could not help thinking of what my father used to say, when Lady Osborne's maid was so long bringing her ladyship a shawl. 'If you want to be served, send—if you want to be *well* served, go.' That was his motto—and though he never acted on it himself, I think I do—and would rather run up three pair of stairs myself, than wait whilst another does it."

"I admire the activity and independence of your spirit, Miss Watson," replied Mr. Howard; "but you have not yet told me what it is you do envy."

"No, and I do not mean to do it," replied

she; "be satisfied with your own conjectures."

"I must if you will say no more. And *you*, Miss Emma, how were you pleased with your evening?"

"Very much—I have come back much wiser than I went; I have made up my mind that the more elevated the situation the less pleasant it would be unless one had been brought up to it."

"Then you would not change places with Lady Osborne?" said he, fixing a pair of very penetrating eyes on her. As she had noticed Lord Osborne's looks without the remotest idea of his meaning anything but to put her out of countenance, and formed no airy speculations as to the possibility of succeeding to the dominion at the Castle, she attached no peculiar meaning to his question.

"I think the supposition hardly a reasonable one," was her answer; "could you suppose I should wish to exchange with a woman old enough to be my mother—give up five and twenty years of life to be a

wealthy middle-aged dowager in claret-coloured satin and diamonds."

Mr. Howard smiled.

"Remember," continued Emma as if retracting, "I mean no disparagement to your friend, who I have no doubt may be a very excellent and amiable woman, but I was speaking merely as she appeared to me to-day."

"There have been young Lady Osbornes," said he almost in a whisper, and as if rather doubtful whether or not to speak the words.

"I suppose so," replied Emma coolly, without the smallest embarrassment, but with a slight shade of reserve in her manner. She never allowed jesting on the topic of matrimony. He saw it immediately.

"Then what do you think you require to make you happy?" said he, to escape from the other subject.

"A very comprehensive question—I should like to know whether you expect a serious answer," replied she gaily.

"A true one, if you please."

“To be with those I love, and have money in my purse—I think that is sufficient: no—I think I should like a house too—”

“Very reasonable and moderate.”

“But preserve me from the slavery of living *en grande dame*; I was not brought up to it—and nothing but habit could make such bonds sit light and gracefully.”

“I believe you are right, and you must certainly be wise.”

He looked at her with unmistakeable admiration; she could not meet his eye, but coloured and fixed hers on the fender. In spite of her embarrassment, however, she felt a real pleasure in the friendly tone he had assumed, and hoped sincerely that the morning would not see him cold and formal again.

“Emma,” said Elizabeth after they had retired for the night, “I am certain that Lord Osborne admires you very much.”

Emma only smiled in reply.

“What do you think about it?” continued Miss Watson.

“That I wish he would find some pleasanter way of testifying his admiration,” said Emma. “I do not know whether he is the only man who ever admired me, but he is certainly the only one who ever looked at me so much.”

“Oh, we must not expect everything arranged just to our taste,” replied Elizabeth; “and whilst you enjoy so much of his attention, you must not complain if he is not the most sprightly of admirers—the honour itself should suffice you. His rank is higher, if his wit is not brighter than Mr. Howard’s.”

“To mention them in the same breath!” cried Emma; “they are the antipodes of each other—as different in sense as in rank—what a pity their position cannot be reversed!”

“Oh, then your objection to being Lady Osborne is not after all to the rank but the man,” cried Elizabeth, “and you are less philosophic than you pretended to be. But if Mr. Howard had been a peer, perhaps you would never have known him.”

“Very likely not,” said Emma calmly, “but I do not see what that has to do with it.”

“Now don’t pretend to be so very innocent and simple-minded, Emma; you know, as well as I do, that the two men are both in love with you, and you, ambitious monkey, not content with things as they are, and choosing between worth and rank, wish to have every advantage combined in one, for your own special acceptance.”

“How can you talk such nonsense, Elizabeth?” said Emma coloring.

“I deny the accusation stoutly; it is you who are unreasonable, whilst I am talking in the most matter-of-fact way imaginable.”

Emma was silent, and after waiting a minute, her sister began again:

“I wonder what Tom Musgrove will say when he hears we have dined at the Castle?”

“Some nonsense I dare say,” replied Emma; “I believe his boastings were at the bottom of your curiosity to go there; you wished to surprise him.”

“Yes I think I did—but was it like what you expected? it was all so grand and formal that *I* felt quite uncomfortable. I am glad to have been, and still more glad that I have come away.”

“It was not the first time I have been in a large house,” said Emma, “and I was not surprised at anything I saw; except that Lady Osborne should take the trouble of wearing so many jewels, and dress in so very juvenile a style.”

“Were you not jealous, Emma? did you not notice how she flirted with Mr. Howard?”

“For shame, Elizabeth, to say such things of our hostess.”

“Nay, indeed it is only truth—I think he had much better marry her. I dare say she has a good jointure, and she may not be very disagreeable to him perhaps! what would you say to that?”

“That he must be a very different Mr. Howard from what I fancy him, if he can be induced to marry for the sake of a jointure,” replied Emma firmly-

“But perhaps he is in love with her,” persisted Miss Watson.

“That alters the case,” said Emma who did not believe anything of the kind.

“I rather think he must be,” continued her sister, “he looked so much pleased at her calling him to the sofa. Or I will tell you another idea that struck me, perhaps he is attached to Miss Osborne, and pays his court to her mother to gain her good word.”

“My dear Elizabeth,” cried Emma rather impatiently. “you have within the last five minutes, concluded Mr. Howard in love with three different people. Some of your conjectures cannot be right, but they may all be wrong—pray leave off guessing, since you cannot arrive at any conclusion.”

“I like Miss Osborne,” said Elizabeth, after a moment’s pause.

“So do I,” replied her sister.

“Better than Miss Carr,” continued Miss Watson, “I have a little fear of Miss Carr; but, Emma, I wonder how my father and Margaret get on, I am afraid he will find it

very dull; she does not like backgammon or reading out loud—and this snow will prevent his getting the newspaper, or seeing any one to amuse him.”

“Yes, I am afraid so,” sighed Emma, “it is very pleasant here, but I wish we were home again.”

“I wish home were like this,” continued Miss Watson, “as airy and cheerful, and elegant-looking—what a nice room this is—we have not such a room in our house—and I am sure our furniture never looks so well, take what care I can of it. You had better take this for your own room when you are Mrs. Howard.”

“I really wish you would not talk in that way, Elizabeth,” remonstrated Emma, “it can do no good, and it will make me feel very uncomfortable.”

“I beg your pardon, I will try not,” said her sister laughing.

Long after her sister was asleep, Emma herself was thinking over the events of the morning, and recalling to memory every tone and word and look of Mr. Howard.

She weighed them all, and tried to comprehend the cause of the changes which seemed to her rather sudden. She could hardly suppose it a caprice—she did not think him guilty of that—but why vary so completely.

She wished to be liked by him; she was pleased with the society both of himself and his sister, and he feared if she did not approve of her manners, or disliked her conversation, his sister likewise would draw back from the friendship which seemed to have begun so prosperously, and she should lose the pleasantest acquaintance she had found since returning to her father's house.

CHAPTER X.

THE aspect of the next morning did not promise any additional facility for returning home; more snow had fallen during the night, and the cutting wind which had accompanied it assured them that the lanes would be still less practicable than before. Emma, assured by the parting words of Lord Osborne that she was doomed to see and be seen by him again, tried to compose her mind and features to bear the threatened inspection. Instead of a visit from him, however, noon brought down a little note from Miss Osborne, reminding her of a wish expressed the night before to see the picture-gallery at the Castle, and offering, if Mr. Howard would escort her up in time

for luncheon, to go round with her afterwards.

“Do you think your brother could spare the time to accompany me?” said she to Mrs. Willis, after communicating to her the contents of the note. “I should be so much obliged if he would—because—” she added rather hesitating, “I do not like to go alone, lest I should encounter the young lord.”

“And you do not like him, my dear?” said Mrs. Willis with a bright look.

“I do not mind him much,” replied Emma; “but I think I would rather not throw myself in his way: going alone would be almost like inviting his escort. Will you ask your brother?”

“I will go to him immediately—but I have no doubt of his acquiescence, and I can assure you in promising you Edward’s company through the picture-gallery Miss Osborne is securing you a *very* great pleasure.”

“It would I am afraid be encroaching

too much on Mr. Howard's time," replied Emma, "to exact his attentions as a cicerone. Miss Osborne has promised to go round with me herself."

"Miss Osborne sometimes breaks her word," said Mrs. Willis coolly; "and as she has usually a good many engagements, perhaps you had better trust to my brother since you seem determined to shun hers."

"I should not expect much intellectual gratification from Lord Osborne's company, or his remarks on painting," replied Emma, almost laughing at the idea.

Mrs. Willis left the room, to speak to her brother. She found him of course in his study, from whence Charles had just been dismissed.

"Edward, are you busy?" said she.

"No; what do you want, Clara?" looking up for a moment and then returning to his papers. "I was just coming to the parlour."

"It is not I, but Emma Watson who wants you."

Mr. Howard turned round to look at his

sister with an expression half pleased, half incredulous.

“Yes indeed, so you need not stare so; Miss Osborne has sent down to ask you to bring her to lunch at the Castle, and go through the picture-gallery afterwards—that is to say, she has promised to go through the gallery, but you must be sure to accompany them.”

Mr. Howard bent over his papers again for a moment in silence.

“Why do not you answer, Edward? There is nothing to prevent your going, is there?—and I am sure you cannot dislike it.”

“Oh, no—but Emma—what did she say to it?”

“She begged me to come and engage you as her escort, that she might avoid falling into the company of Lord Osborne, who she seemed to apprehend might be lying in wait for her. Elizabeth Watson does not care for paintings, and means to remain with me.”

“It will give me the greatest pleasure,” said Mr. Howard, starting up, and beginning to put away his books and papers. “Now, or at any time she will name, I am quite at her service. When does she wish to go?”

“Immediately, I should think, as they lunch at one—that is, as soon as she can get herself ready. I will go back and give her your message at once.”

They were soon on their way. The air was bright and exhilarating—and it would have been very pleasant walking but for the ground being exceedingly slippery. It may be doubtful whether Mr. Howard thought this an evil, since it compelled his companion to lean on him for support, up the steep ascent which conducted them to the castle. Even with the assistance of his arm, she was obliged to pause and take breath, before they had accomplished more than half the ascent. From the point where they stood, they commanded a beautiful view—the parsonage and the church lying snugly at their

feet, and the snow-clad country stretching out beyond, chequered with rich hanging woods of beech on the sides of the hills, and thick coppices of underwood down in the valley. Emma expressed her admiration with enthusiasm. Mr. Howard assured her that if she would move a short distance along a path to the left, she would enjoy a still more splendid panorama. The snow had been swept from off the gravel, and Emma could not resist the temptation, though it was diverging from their object. There was plenty of time, —since they need not be at the castle till one—and it was now little more than half past twelve. They turned into the path accordingly, and soon reached the spot he had mentioned: from this point they likewise had a peep at the castle, situated some way above them; and whilst they were standing there, Mr. Howard observed:

“There is Lord Osborne just coming out at the side door, near his own rooms—do you see him.”

Emma perceived and watched him.

“I think he is taking the path to your house—is he not?”

“Yes, we shall meet him presently, if we turr and pursue our walk upwards.”

“Oh! then, pray let us stay here till he is gone past,” said Emma, hastily. “I do not wish to meet him in the least.”

Mr. Howard looked so excessively pleased that Emma deeply coloured, and was nearly thinking his eyes as troublesome as those of his former pupil.

It will easily be believed that he did not press the proposition to meet Lord Osborne, —on the contrary, he acquiesced with very good grace in her wish to remain concealed till all danger of encountering him was passed away. As soon as the winding of the path hid him entirely from sight, they proceeded upwards and reached the castle without further incident, having only consumed half an hour in a walk which might have been easily accomplished in a third of that time. Yet Emma did not find the walk tedious, and Mr. Howard never discovered the period it had occupied.

They were shewn to Miss Osborne's own sitting room, where they found her practising on the harp. Miss Carr was lounging amongst the soft pillows of a comfortable chair—from which she hardly raised herself to address the visitors. Her friend was extremely good-humoured and civil. She pressed Emma's hand affectionately—enquired tenderly after her health, and expressed herself excessively obliged by her coming.

“Luncheon is waiting,” added she, “you will not see mama, she is never visible of a morning—but did you not meet my brother?”

Emma coloured, and as she did not answer immediately, Mr. Howard replied—

“We saw him at a distance—but he did not join us.”

“I am surprised,” said Miss Carr, “for I know he set off on purpose to escort Miss Emma Watson up here. Which way did you come, to pass him?”

“It is easily accounted for,” replied Emma, calmly, “Mr. Howard had taken me

out of the direct road to shew me a good view of the castle—and Lord Osborne passed whilst we were looking at it.”

“It is a pity you did not stop him,” pursued Miss Carr, “he would not then have had his walk for nothing.”

Emma made no answer. She did not think it necessary to inform Miss Carr that the honor of Lord Osborne’s company was not a thing that she coveted.

When their luncheon was over, Miss Osborne renewed her offer of guiding Emma through the picture gallery—observing that they had better not lose time, as there was no light to spare in a winter’s afternoon.

“But you must come too,” continued she, addressing Mr. Howard. “I am sure you know more about the pictures than I do—and are much better worth listening to on *that* subject, at least.”

“Your humility, Miss Osborne, is most commendable,” said he, with a playful bow.

“Oh, yes, I am the humblest creature in

the world—there are some things in which I believe you and a few others are wiser than myself—Greek and mathematics for instance,”

“Your learning in those two branches did not use to be remarkable.”

“Oh, I dare say I know as much as half those who have passed through Eton—they learnt to forget—I forgot to learn—there is not much difference.”

“Not as you state it, certainly; apparently, you hold the learning of your acquaintance rather cheaply.”

“Well, perhaps I do—but, really, one seldom meets with *very* wise men in these days: one *hears* such prodigies have existed in former times—but, I dare say they were not at all like the generality of our gentlemen companions, and would be sadly at a loss to comprehend our amusements, could they re-appear on the scene.”

“You know scholars are proverbially awkward, bashful and absent—and, unless you would tolerate all those capital crimes,

you need not wish for them in your company."

"I look upon you as a scholar, Mr. Howard," said the young lady, laughing.

"I cannot plead guilty to the impeachment, Miss Osborne."

"But I do not consider you particularly awkward nor intolerably bashful—and—what was the third crime you laid to the charge of scholars?"

"I forget."

"What intolerable affectation," cried Miss Osborne, "you want to be accused of absence of mind. But here we are at the gallery. Now, Miss Watson, make Mr. Howard tell you all about them."

The collection was really a very good one, and Emma was delighted. Miss Osborne looked at two or three, then sauntered about the room—looked out of the window—and, at length, returning to her companions, said:

"I have just recollected an engagement, for which I must leave you—I will be back as

soon as I can; but don't hurry, and don't wait for me. You may be quite comfortable here, nobody will disturb you."

She then left them to another protracted *tête-à-tête*; a particularly pleasant circumstance to Mr. Howard, who found an increasing charm in Emma's conversation.

When tired of walking about and straining their eyes upwards, they sat down on a comfortable sofa in a recess, where they could at once enjoy the view of a beautiful landscape, and converse comfortably.

"You surely must have been used to look at good paintings," said Mr. Howard, "It is a taste that requires as much cultivation as any other art. You evidently know how to look at a picture, and how to appreciate its merit."

"I do not pretend to be a connoisseur, I assure you," said Emma.

"There is no occasion that you should—you have an eye and a taste, which, lead your judgment right, and I can perceive

that you are well acquainted with the styles as well as the names of great artists."

"I almost suspect you of quizzing me," replied Emma, blushing, "have I been saying or affecting more than you think I felt."

"You are unjust to us both in such an idea," cried he, "I should not take such a liberty; and you are in no danger of tempting me."

"My kind uncle was extremely fond of the art," said Emma, "and he took me to every good collection and exhibition within our reach. He likewise took great pains to form and correct my taste; so that I ought rather to blush at knowing so little, than receive compliments on the subject."

"I do not know of what uncle you are speaking," said Mr. Howard, in a manner that denoted his interest in her connections; "you forget that I know almost nothing of your family."

"The uncle who brought me up; Dr. Maitland."

“Then you were not educated at Winston?”

“I—oh no—my home was formerly in my uncle’s house—I have not been more than two months resident in my father’s family.”

“I dare say you think me a very stupid fellow for not being aware of this—but though I saw you were different from your sisters, and indeed most of the young ladies of the neighbourhood, the reason never occurred to me.”

“You thought, I suppose, I was a sort of Cinderella,” said Emma laughing, “let out by some benevolent fairy on the occasion of one ball, and that having once escaped into public, I could not be repressed again.”

“You know I had not been in your father’s house, and had therefore no reason to assign you an imaginary abode in the kitchen, in preference to the parlour, where I had never been. But I own I was surprised by your sudden apparition, since I had neither in ball-room or street, town or

country, seen or heard of more than three Miss Watsons."

"I can easily believe it—so protracted an absence will naturally sink one's name in oblivion."

"May I ask if you are to return to your uncle's house?"

"Alas! no—my dear, kind uncle died not quite a twelvemonth ago—my aunt has left England to settle in Ireland—and my home is now at my father's."

"Is it not with rather a strange sensation that you meet your nearest relations; they must be almost unknown to you."

"I have made acquaintance with one brother and two sisters," replied Emma with something like a sigh; "But I have yet to meet another brother and sister."

"It seems almost a pity," said Mr. Howard thoughtfully, "to bring up one child apart and differently from the other members of a family, if they are ultimately to be rejoined. At least I feel in my own case how much I should have lost, had Clara been separated from me in childhood. I suppose

it rarely happens that a brother and sister are so much together as we were—but we were orphans, and everything to each other till her marriage.”

“It does not do, Mr. Howard, to indulge in retrospective considerations, if they tend to make one dissatisfied,” said Emma, with an attempt to check a tear or hide it by a smile; “my friends wished to do everything for the best, and if the result has been different from their intentions, they are not to blame. But I do not know that I should choose to repeat the experiment for one under my care.”

“Do you like the neighbourhood?” enquired he, feeling that he had no right to press the last subject further.

“I have seen so little; the weather has been so unfavourable, but it does not strike me as being very beautiful about Winston. I was used to fine scenery in the west of England.”

“Then you will naturally think Winston flat and uninteresting.—Osborne Castle and its park have beauties, however, which you

cannot despise—but in my enquiry I rather referred to the inhabitants—have you pleasant neighbours about your father's house—I do not visit in the village.”

“We live so very quietly,” replied Emma, who had no intention of satisfying his curiosity as to their acquaintance, “that I have had no opportunity of judging. I *saw* a great many people at the ball, but as you must have seen them too, you are as equal to decide on their appearance as I am.”

“You know Mr. Tom Musgrove of course?”

“A little.”

“He is not a person of whom most young ladies answer so coolly; if I put the same question to five out of six of my acquaintance, they would reply with rapture—he is charming—divine—a perfect pattern for all gentlemen.”

“I understood he was a great favorite,” observed Emma, still in the same composed voice.

“I have been used to consider him such

a perfect example in everything relative to the important concerns of fashion and the toilette," said Mr. Howard, gravely, "things which I know are of the first importance in the eyes of ladies, that I have seriously proposed when I wish to be particularly charming to copy him in the tying of his cravat."

"I am not quite sure whether I should think any one improved by copying Mr. Tom Musgrove, from his cravat to his shoe-buckles: but I have, I am afraid, a wicked prejudice, against any individual who is considered *universally* agreeable."

"Alas you discourage my young ambition; if to be universally agreeable is to be hated by you, I shall leave forthwith my attempts at pleasing. To how many individuals is it allowable to be friendly? to how many cold? to how many repulsive in order to win your good opinion."

"Impossible for me to answer without more data for my calculations. You must tell me, to begin with, how many you have been in the habit of flattering daily!"

“None, I assure you—there is not a more sincere creature under the sun.”

“I do not quite believe you—but if you will not own to that—with how many do you consider yourself a particular favorite.”

“That is an artful question—you wish to prove me guilty of general agreeableness—but my native modesty stands my friend there: I do not think more than two thirds of my acquaintance consider me a very charming fellow—amongst ladies, I mean—of course, a man’s opinion goes for nothing.”

“Ah, that is too many by half to please me—if you had always spoken with sincerity, depend upon it your particular admirers would be less numerous.”

“But seriously, Miss Watson, why do you feel a particular enmity to the general favorites of your sex!”

“Seriously then, because I mistrust them.”

“You think then truth must be sacrificed to popularity? Is not that rather

a severe reflection on the taste of other women."

"I did not mean it as such."

"I never knew any one who did not profess to hate flattery."

"Very likely—but I go a step farther—I dislike the flatterer."

"And by what scale do you measure, so as to form a correct decision—is your standard of your own merit so accurately settled, that you can instantly perceive truth from flattery, appropriating just so much of a compliment as you deserve, and rejecting the rest."

"I think, Mr. Howard, I am more inclined to decide on the value of compliments from the character of the giver, than from my own. If an individual either man or woman dares to say a disagreeable truth, I cannot suspect them of an agreeable falsehood. Or if they are as ready to praise the absent, as to compliment the present, then I listen with more complaisance."

"It is fortunate for some men that all

young ladies are not like you; their stock of conversation would be reduced very low, if neither praises of the present nor abuse of the absent were tolerated."

"I differ from you, Mr. Howard. If no one would *listen* to slander much less evil would happen in the world; much unhappiness would be saved—much moral guilt would be avoided."

"True: call it by its right name—slander—and every one shrinks from it; the habit of softening down our expressions leads to much evil—a little scandal, nobody minds that."

"Most detestable of all is the flattery from mercenary motives. To see a man—a young man courting, flattering, cajoling a woman for her money—one to whom he would, were she poor, hardly deign to address a word—selling himself body and soul for gold—oh, it makes one shudder—it tempts me to unjust, harsh thoughts of the whole species. Hateful!"

Mr. Howard looked at his companion with considerable surprise. She certainly

was using rather strong expressions, and evidently felt acutely what she was saying. As he, however, was perfectly ignorant of the circumstances of her aunt's marriage, and never for a moment thought of anything of the sort, an idea passed through his mind that she might allude to himself and Lady Osborne, for though he could not plead guilty to anything on his own part which deserved such condemnation, it was possible his conduct might appear in this light to her eyes. He did not stop to consider whether it was probable, or in accordance with her character to make such personal reflections, but fell into a reverie on the subject of his own manners, from which he was roused by her addressing him again.

“I am quite ashamed, Mr. Howard, of having spoken so bitterly just now—pray forget what I said if possible—at least do not decide on my being a very ill-natured person because I spoke harshly—there are sometimes circumstances on which to reflect invariably creates unpleasant sensations—but the past

is passed, and should not be allowed to awaken angry feelings.”

“I fancy we have strayed a long way from the point which awakened these reflections,” said Mr. Howard trying to recover himself likewise. “Tom Musgrove was the commencement of our dissertation on flattery.”

“Mr. Musgrove—yes, so he was, but I had indeed forgotten it; my thoughts were many miles off—they had gone back many months.”

“Your opinion of him does not seem very high,” observed he, much relieved at the termination of her sentence.

“My opinion of him is of too little consequence to be worth discussing,” replied Emma: “I have not seen a great deal of him, but I fancy my father does not estimate him very highly.”

“But you cannot deny him the advantage of having plenty to say for himself.”

“Plenty indeed—sufficient to make any discussion amongst others on that subject unnecessary.”

“He is handsome too, in the opinion of most women.”

“I do not deny it.”

“And you know he has a very comfortable independence.”

“On that point, Mr. Howard, I feel incredulous: independence is the very thing he wants. His principal object seems to be to follow another.”

“I see you are hardened against him.”

“You think me prejudiced, no doubt.”

“I have no wish to combat your prejudice, or persuade you into liking him against your will.”

A pause ensued, when Emma suddenly starting from her reverie, exclaimed,

“It is almost dusk—we must really return home.”

“True, we can come again another day; I am sure you may come whenever you feel disposed—I shall be most happy to escort you.”

At this moment the door was thrown back, and Lord Osborne himself appeared.

After paying his compliments, he paused a moment, and then observed,

“You must have a precious strong taste for pictures, Miss Watson, to like to remain in the gallery even when it is too dark to see. I suppose breathing the same air is pleasant to those who value the art.”

“We have stayed longer than we intended, my lord,” said Emma; “and I really feel much obliged to your sister for allowing me such a pleasure; but we expected her to join us.”

“It’s a mighty fine thing to have such a lot of fine pictures, with all the fine names tacked on to them. One or two I really like myself—there’s one of some horses, by somebody, excellent—and a Dutch painting of dead game, which is so like you would really think them all alive. Did you notice it?”

“Not particularly—I do not care much for still life.”

“Howard there knows all about them: he has the names and dates and all on the tip of his tongue. Don’t you find it a deuced bore to listen to it?”

“On the contrary, I am much obliged to Mr. Howard for the information.”

“Well I should be glad, for my part, of a piece of information: how the—I beg pardon—I mean how the wonder did I contrive to miss you as I was going down the straight path to the Parsonage.”

“Because we did not come up the straight path, my lord.”

“Well, on my honour, I just was surprised when I got there to hear you were gone—stole away in fact. ‘Holloa! how can that be!’ said I, ‘I did not meet them—no indeed.’ ‘Did you not!’ cried Mrs. Willis. ‘Well deuce take it, that is extraordinary!’”

“Did she say so indeed,” said Emma with exemplary gravity.

“I don’t mean to say she used those very words—she thought them, though, I’m sure, by her look.”

“But now, my lord, we must wish you good evening, or Mrs. Willis will be waiting for dinner; and though I am not afraid

of her swearing at us, I do not wish to annoy her."

"Ah, yes, Mrs. Willis is mistress—I know—the Parson there, like myself, is under petticoat government; nothing like a mother or sister to keep one in order. I'll be bound a wife is nothing to it. One cannot get away from a sister, and one can't make her quiet and obedient—you see she has never undertaken anything of the kind, as I understand wives do when one marries them."

"But I have heard, my lord, that they sometimes break their word and rebel," said Emma with mock solemnity.

"Ah, but that must be the husband's fault, he gives them too much rein—keep a strict hand on them, that's my maxim."

"I recommend you, however, to keep it a secret, if you wish to find a wife; I assure you no woman would marry you if she knew your opinion."

"Seriously—well but I am sorry I said so then."

"Oh, never mind—there is no harm done

as yet—I promise not to betray you—but here we are at Miss Osborne’s room, will she expect us to look in—or shall we go straight home, Mr. Howard?’

“We’ll see if Rosa’s here,” said her brother, opening the door as he spoke. The room, however, was empty, and there was nothing to be done but return home. Emma was vexed to find the young peer persisted in escorting them. Though his conversation had been much shorter than Mr. Howard’s, she was far more weary of it. To hurry her walk, was her only remedy, and the coldness of the air was a plausible excuse for this. The space which had occupied nearly half an hour in ascending, was now traversed in five minutes, and breathless but glowing, the party reached the door of the parsonage. Here Lord Osborne was really obliged to leave them, and Emma hastened to her room to prepare for dinner.

“Well, Emma,” cried Elizabeth, “I should like to know what you have been doing all

this time—what an age you have been gone!”

“Looking at pictures, Elizabeth—you know what I went for.”

“I know what you went for indeed, but how do I know what you stayed for. Pictures indeed—looking at pictures for two hours and a half—and in the dark too!”

Emma laughed.

“Of what do you suspect me, Elizabeth?” cried she as her sister placed a candle so as to throw the light on her face.

“Which have you been flirting with?” said Elizabeth taking her sister’s hand, and closely examining her countenance. “The peer or the parson, which of your two admirers do you prefer?”

“How can you ask such an unnecessary question?” returned Emma, blushing and laughing, yet struggling to disengage herself, “would you hesitate yourself—is not Lord Osborne the most captivating, elegant, lively, fascinating young nobleman who ever made rank gracious and desirable. Would *you* not certainly accept him?”

“Why yes, I think I should—it would be something to be Lady Osborne—mistress of all those rooms and servants, carriages and horses. I think I should like it, but then I shall never have the choice!”

“So far as I am concerned, I do not think I shall interfere with your power of accepting him—if he makes you an offer, do not refuse it on my account.”

“Very well—and when I am Lady Osborne, I will be very kind to Mrs. Howard—I will send and ask her to dine with me most Sundays, and some week days too.”

“I hope she will like it.”

“I will give her a new gown at Easter, and a pelisse or bonnet at Christmas!”

“Your liberality is most exemplary, but in the midst of your kind intentions to Mrs. Howard, I fear you are forgetting Mrs. Willis and her dinner. If you do not finish your dressing quickly you will keep them waiting.”

Elizabeth took her sister's advice, and finished her toilette with all possible despatch. It was singular that though invari-

ably consuming double the time that sufficed for Emma, the result of her efforts in adjusting her clothes was much less satisfactory. She never looked *finished*. Her hair was certain to fall down too low; or her gown burst open, or her petticoat peeped out from underneath: she was always finding a string, or a button, or a loop wanting, just when such a loss was particularly inconvenient—always in a hurry, always behind hand, always good-naturedly sorry, but always as far from amendment.

The evening was spent in quiet comfort, far removed from the stately grandeur of the yester-night's scene—they closed round the fire, chatting and laughing, cracking nuts and eating home-baked cakes with a zest which Osborne Castle and its lordly halls could not rival. They talked of the snow melting, and Charles and his uncle too persisted in the greatest incredulity on that subject. A hundred other things were discussed, made charming by the ease and good-humour with which they

were canvassed, and then a book was produced. Shakespeare was placed in Mr. Howard's hands, and he read with a degree of feeling and taste, which made it very delightful to his listeners. Thus the evening passed peacefully and quickly, and when they separated for the night, it was with increased good will and affection between the parties.

CHAPTER XI.

THE next morning, though ushered in by no change of the weather, brought a very material alteration to the Miss Watsons. About eleven o'clock, as the ladies were working together, their attention was attracted by the sound of carriage wheels on the drive to the house. Presently a note was handed to Miss Watson, accompanied by an assurance that the carriage was waiting. With much surprise, Elizabeth opened the dispatch. It was from her father, and contained information to the effect, that wearied by their long absence, and finding that the lanes were still blocked up, he had sent their man to the post town for a chaise, in which they could

return home, by taking the high road, which, although greatly adding to the distance, was the safest and most expeditious route they could adopt. He begged them to return immediately in the post-chaise, and Robert could follow with their own little vehicle after them. Kind as the family had been to them, the girls were still glad of a prospect of returning home before Sunday, being conscious that they could be ill spared from their father's house, and that every hour of enjoyment to them, was probably unpleasant and wearisome to him.

They could not be parted with, of course, without great regret and many remonstrances on the subject of the dangerous nature of the expedition they were undertaking. Charles, in particular, gave them such repeated assurances that they would certainly be upset, that Emma declared her belief that his foreknowledge arose from having bribed the postilion to bring on a catastrophe. Mrs. Willis' object seemed to be to overwhelm them with cloaks, furs, shawls,

and everything she could think of to fence the cold away, and Mr. Howard obviated all difficulty about returning these articles, by volunteering to drive over as soon as the weather permitted, and fetch them all back. Hopes of a continued friendship closed the visit, and they parted on the best possible terms.

Their return home was perfectly uneventful. There was not even the cold to complain of—so well had Mrs. Willis succeeded in wrapping them up.

Most cordial was the welcome they received from Mr. Watson ; and Margaret, too, really looked enlivened by the sight of them.

“ I shall not let you young ladies go visiting again in a hurry,” said he good-humouredly, “ I began to think one of you must have eloped with Lord Osborne, and the other with Mr. Howard. I assure you, we have been very dull without you.”

Such was his salutation—Margaret’s rau as follows :

“ Well, I hope you have been having plea-

sure enough—and that you will have brought home some news to enliven us. I am sure I am almost dead of stupidity and dulness. Not a creature have we seen—not an individual has come near us. Some people contrive to keep all the amusement—all the luck—everything that is good and pleasant to themselves.”

The astonishment of Margaret, when she heard the detail of what had occurred, was excessive; she was ready to cry with vexation and envy, to think of her sisters having so much to amuse them—of which she did not partake. With jealous anger she insisted on knowing every particular, for the sake, apparently, of tormenting herself to the uttermost, and being as miserable and ill-used as possible.

Every dish at dinner—every jewel in Lady Osborne's necklace—every word said to be spoken by the ladies at the castle, and every amusement suggested by the inhabitants of the parsonage, was an additional sting to her mind; and she was more than ever convinced that it was an act of the

most barbarous injustice, the not allowing her to accompany her sisters—though nothing could be more evident than the total impossibility of such an arrangement. In vain did Emma try to turn the conversation to some less irritating topic; Margaret pertinaciously returned to the original theme, and insisted on learning every thing which her sisters could tell her.

There are various tastes amongst the inhabitants of the world; some delight in making themselves happy, some in just the reverse; Margaret's pleasure was to fret; her pastime was to vex herself. Had she been the only victim to this peculiar taste, there would have been less harm in it; but, unfortunately, her father and sisters were likewise sufferers, and in as much as they were involuntary sufferers, and really took no pleasure in her vexation, it was rather hard upon them to be involved in the same calamity.

In progress of time the snow melted from the ground, and the inhabitants of the rectory at Winston were again set free

from confinement. As soon as the roads became at all passable, Emma began to catch herself wondering when Mr. Howard would redeem his promise of coming to fetch the articles with which his sister had supplied them. She likewise detected herself in what she considered another failing; this was looking round the untidy rooms of her father's home, with their dingy carpets, faded curtains, papers soiled by the hands of the servants and children, and tables unpolished and scratched, and contrasting them mentally with the clear and cheerful aspect of the apartments where Mrs. Willis was mistress. The grandeur of Osborne Castle had none of the charms in her eyes which Mrs. Willis' little parlour presented, and she came to the conclusion that the happiest thing in the world must be to preside over such an establishment with such a companion. Those feelings, however, she did not openly express, in which she differed from Elizabeth, who repeatedly declared that she

wished she could make their house resemble Mr. Howard's.

One morning, shortly after their return home, Tom Musgrove, whom they had not seen since that event, was ushered into the parlour.

Margaret, who happened to be alone, was instantly all agitation and bustle, trying to persuade him to take her chair by the fire, as she was sure he must be cold, or to accept the loan of her father's slippers whilst his boots were sent to the kitchen to dry.

He persisted, however, in declining her tender attentions, declaring she wanted to make an old man of him before his time, and placing himself on the hearth-rug, with his back to the fire, and his hands behind him, half whistled an air.

Margaret sighed.

"It is long since we have seen you," said she; "and the time has passed very wearily."

"Hum," said Tom, stopping in his

tune. "Where are your sisters, Miss Margaret?"

"Oh, they are at home again," replied Margaret. "I believe Emma is with my father, and Elizabeth in the kitchen. Did you hear of their being away so long?"

"How long?" cried Tom.

"From Wednesday to Saturday: there was I left without a creature to speak to except my father and the servants, snowed up in the house, and if they had only taken me with them, I should have enjoyed it as much as they did."

"I dare say; but how came they to go?" said Tom, who though really knowing nothing about it, was determined to learn all he could without betraying his ignorance.

"Oh, they wanted to return Mrs. Willis' visit, and they went over in the pony-chaise, and then the snow came on and stopped them there all that time. I dare say they liked to stay, for I have no doubt but they might have come home had they tried. At last my father was obliged to

send for a post-chaise to fetch them home in, and they came on Saturday."

"And they liked it very much, did they?"

"Oh yes, of course—was it not hard I could not go too? I am always thwarted and ill-used."

"I wish your sister Emma would come down; she is always shut up in your father's room; I called here on purpose to see her."

"I dare say she will come presently—do sit down here; I am sure you ought to rest yourself; you seem to have had a very dirty ride."

"You could not go and call her, I suppose?"

"Oh no, she will come when she has done reading to my father. Do take something—a biscuit and a glass of wine, or something of that kind."

"Quite unnecessary, I have but just breakfasted. I do not keep such gothic hours as some of my friends do. I am able

to please myself—a free and independent man.”

“No doubt a happy one. Ah, Mr. Musgrove, you are most fortunate. You cannot tell the misery, the low spirits, the—the—in short all we poor helpless women suffer from, how much heart-breaking sorrow we endure in silence—bitterness of heart of which the world knows nothing.”

Tom only whistled again in reply to this very pathetic address, then turning round began to examine the ornaments on the chimney-piece. Even Margaret could not quite blind herself to the change in his manner since the period when her smiles seemed the object he most coveted.

Presently he began again.

“Whilst your sisters were at Howard’s did they see much of the Osbornes?”

Before Margaret had time to give an account of the visit to the Castle, Elizabeth entered the room.

“So I understand, Miss Watson, you have been playing the truant, and been

obliged to be brought back almost by force."

"And are you come to congratulate or condole with me on our return?"

"I am come to wish you joy about being overwhelmed in the snow. I little thought when I was last at Osborne Castle we were such near neighbours."

"When were you there?" cried Elizabeth.

"Let me see—I think it was Thursday. I am there very often, but I think Thursday was the last day. How droll it would have been had we met."

"Emma," cried Miss Watson, as her youngest sister just then entered the room, "Mr. Musgrove says he was at the Castle on Thursday."

"Oh," said Emma.

"I wonder we did not hear of it," pursued Elizabeth. "Miss Osborne never mentioned it."

"How do you like Miss Osborne," enquired Tom, who wanted to appear perfectly

well informed as to what had passed, and was, therefore, ashamed of asking questions which might betray his real ignorance.

“She seems a very pleasant, amiable young lady,” replied Elizabeth, “don’t you think so, Emma.”

“Yes,” replied she, quietly.

“Did she know you were friends of mine, Miss Watson? Miss Emma, did she not talk about me?”

“No, indeed,” replied Emma, with much satisfaction; “we never heard your name mentioned the whole time we were in company with her.”

“How did you hear we had been there,” enquired Elizabeth.

“I think Osborne mentioned it on Saturday, when I saw him for a minute,” then seating himself by Emma, who was a little apart from the others, he whispered; “He told me the beautiful, but obdurate Miss Watson had been at Howard’s parsonage. Why do you treat him with such scorn, Miss Emma? You will drive my poor friend to despair.”

“I should be sorry to think that I merited your accusation, Mr. Musgrove: scorn cannot be a becoming quality in a young lady.”

“Nay, there can be nothing unbecoming which you can do; youth and beauty have unlimited privileges,” whispered he again. “Miss Osborne vows you eclipse Miss Carr in beauty, and she would rather have you for a friend. She is dying to be introduced to you.”

“It is quite unnecessary to inflict such a death upon her even in imagination, Mr. Musgrove—for our acquaintance has progressed too far for that phrase to be at all applicable to it.”

“Yes now, I dare say; Osborne told me, but I forget, you went over the castle I think.”

“No, we did not.”

“You did not! that was unlucky; I wish I had known you were going, I would have been there, and I could have suggested it to Miss Osborne; I dare say she would have shewn you all the rooms.”

“She offered to do so, but we put it off till another time; we thought we should be too hurried.”

“It’s a pity you did not dine there; its something quite grand to see all the plate—I quite enjoy it—they give such good dinners.”

“You do not seem aware that we *did* dine there,” replied Emma, “and, as I had seen other large establishments before, I saw nothing so very astonishing at their table.”

“You did dine there—yes—but that was in a family way; the thing is to see a regular great dinner—twenty people sitting down—that is what I like.”

“I am not fond of large dinner parties; unless one has a very pleasant neighbour they are apt to be dull.”

“Very much so—very much so indeed; I quite agree with you, a little, quiet, social dinner—where one person can talk and the others listen, that is pleasant. You get every thing hot and quickly—that’s the thing!”

Emma did not feel called on to answer, and presently he added :

“I should like to have *you* for a neighbour at such a dinner.”

Emma was still obdurately silent, and Mr. Musgrove, to recompense himself, turned to Elizabeth, and began to talk to her.

As soon as her attention was released Emma left the room, and throwing on a bonnet and cloak, determined to take refuge in the garden as the day was fine, and she longed for fresh air. Hardly had she quitted the entrance, however, when her attention was attracted by the sound of wheels in the lane, and looking up her cheek crimsoned with pleasure at perceiving Mr Howard.

The pleasure was certainly mutual, judging from the alacrity with which he sprang from the carriage to meet and address her. There was no mistaking the look and air with which he advanced, it was the genuine expression of a cordial wel-

come, met with equal though more bashful cordiality on her side.

He was come, of course, to redeem his promise of fetching back his sister's property; she would have come also, but she had a cold which confined her to the house. But he had another object in his visit—he was the bearer of an invitation to herself and sisters to attend a concert at the Castle, which was to take place in the afternoon, and to be followed by a ball in the evening. Miss Osborne hoped they would excuse her mother's not having called on them; she scarcely ever paid visits, never in the winter, or she would have accompanied her daughter to the Vicarage when they were there.

Emma read the note which was addressed to herself, and felt very much pleased. It contained, besides the invitation to the ball for herself and sisters, a most pressing request that she would pay a lengthened visit at the Castle; over this she pondered long, and then ended with coming to no conclusion, suddenly remembering that she was detaining Mr. Howard out of doors, when

she ought to have allowed him to enter the house.

“ You will find Mr. Tom Musgrove sitting with my sisters,” continued she; “ but if you will be so kind as *not* to mention the contents of the note before him, you would greatly oblige me.”

“ Could I not see Mr. Watson?” replied Mr. Howard; “ I wish to call on him, and perhaps when my visit to him is over your sisters will be disengaged.”

“ Certainly; I am sure my father would have great pleasure in seeing you,” said Emma much gratified; “ allow me to show you the way.”

She ushered him accordingly to her father’s dressing-room, and having witnessed the very cordial reception which Mr. Watson offered him, she was about to withdraw, but her father stopped her.

“ I am sure you can have nothing particular to do, Emma, so you may just as well stay and talk to Mr. Howard—I like very much to hear you, but you know I am not strong enough to converse myself.”

“I am sure, my dear father, nobody talks half so well when you are equal to it, but indeed you must not fancy yourself unwell, or you will frighten Mr. Howard away.”

“When Mr. Howard has reached my age, my dear, and felt half the pain that I do, from gout and dyspepsia, he will be very glad to set his daughter to talk for him, my dear; so I beg you will stay.”

“I wish I enjoyed the prospect of realizing your picture, my dear sir; a daughter exactly like Miss Emma Watson would be indeed a treasure.”

“But remember it is to be purchased at the expense of gout, and you must not look for it these thirty years, Mr. Howard,” said Emma laughing. “When the sacrifice is complete you will talk in a very different strain.”

Mr. Howard *looked* very incredulous, but said nothing more on that subject.

Emma then mentioned the note she had received; her father began to murmur.

“The Osbornes will turn all your heads

with their balls and their visits, child," said he pettishly. "I wish you had never known them."

Emma looked down.

"I am sure I do not wish to go, if you dislike it," said she, in a voice which rather trembled.

It was evident to Mr. Howard that she *did* wish it very much.

Mr. Watson began again.

"What am I to do if you are going away for two or three days? You are but just come home as it is—I cannot do without you."

"Then I, at all events, can stay with you," replied Emma cheerfully, "and my sisters can do as they please."

Annoyed at the gentleman's selfishness, Mr. Howard felt inclined to interpose, but doubted whether he should not do more harm than good.

Emma knew better, or acted more wisely in not contradicting him, for like many irritable people, the moment he found himself unopposed, he began to relent, and said in a more placid voice,

“What’s the invitation, read it again, Emma, I am not quite clear about it.”

Emma complied.

“Well, I do not know; she does not want you all to stay over the ball—and as Elizabeth will be at home, perhaps I could spare you for a day or two.”

“Elizabeth would like to go to the ball too, papa.”

“Yes, yes, but then she and Margaret would come home at night, and I should not be all day alone. I think you might go—you must have a post-chaise and a pair of horses to take you, I suppose, and bring your sisters back again. Would you like it, my dear?”

“Very much, sir, if it does not disturb you.”

Like it indeed—the words served but coldly to express the pleasure with which her heart beat at the idea. It was so very kind of Miss Osborne to think of her in that way, and it was so very pleasant to see how much consequence Mr. Howard attached to her acceptance of the offer.

She had not dared to look quite at him; but the first glance she had ventured on, showed in his face an expression of deep interest, not to be mistaken, and now looking up, she met his eyes fixed on her with a look which immediately sunk hers again to the ground, and seemed to call all the blood from her heart to her cheeks.

“I am sure,” cried he, speaking hurriedly to relieve her embarrassment, “Miss Osborne would have been exceedingly disappointed had you settled otherwise. I can venture to assert, sir, that Miss Osborne is very fond of your daughter, and extremely anxious to cultivate her acquaintance.”

“I dare say, I dare say, why should she not; but I hope Emma does not flatter her to win her good will.”

“I hope not, sir,” said Emma, “I should despise myself if I did.”

“It is impossible that it should be necessary,” cried Mr. Howard. “Miss Osborne is not to be propitiated by flattery, and it would require, on Miss Emma’s part, nothing beyond her natural manners to

produce a wish to carry on the acquaintance."

"I suppose Miss Osborne desired you to make civil speeches for her," said Mr. Watson, laughing.

"No, I do it of my own free will, my dear sir."

Mr. Howard's visit was long and lively; Mr. Watson was evidently cheered by it, and pressed him to renew it.

"I am afraid I ask what is not agreeable," continued he; "I dare say I am dull and unpleasant; but if you knew what a treat it is to me to see cheerful faces, you would not wonder at my selfish wish. You, Mr. Howard, and Emma do me good."

There was something very pleasant to Emma's ears in hearing her name thus connected with Mr. Howard's; and it was not unwelcome to the young man either, who warmly pressed her father's hand, and promised readily to come as often as he could.

"And mind, Emma, when he does come, you bring him to me," said her father;

“it is not every young man that I care to see. Your Tom Musgroves, and such young dandies, are not at all to my mind ; but a young man who listens to what his elders say, and does not flout and jeer at them, but shows a proper respect to age and experience, that’s what I like. I shall be happy to see you, Mr. Howard, whenever you can come.”

After renewing his promise to be a regular and frequent visitor, Mr. Howard was conducted by Emma to the parlour, from whence they found Tom Musgrove had departed. Her two sisters looked up as if surprised to see Emma and her companion ; but their pleasure much exceeded their surprise, when they learnt the nature of the embassy with which he was charged. Margaret especially, who had formed most exalted ideas of the nature and felicity of a visit to the castle, was at first in a perfect rapture. She was certain that the whole affair would be in the most superlative style of excellence ; that Miss Osborne must be

a lady of first rate taste and talent; that the company would be select in an extraordinary degree, and in short that she should never have known what grandeur, beauty, elegance, and taste meant, but for Lady Osborne's invitation to the concert and ball. She determined to do her best to make her court to the whole family of Osbornes, and had great hopes of becoming an especial favorite with them all. It was not till after Mr. Howard's departure, which took place after a visit of about ten minutes, that a cloud came over her bright vision. She then learnt the sad fact that Emma was invited to remain at the castle, but that she herself was to return home.

This discovery made her very angry; she could comprehend no reason for such a marked preference; why should Miss Osborne invite Emma who was the youngest, and exclude herself; it really surpassed her comprehension; it was most extraordinary; she had a gret mind not to go at all; she would let Miss Osborne see that she was not to be treated with neglect;

she was not a person to come and go at any one's bidding; if Miss Osborne could ask Emma, why not herself too; she surely had as much claim to attention. Then she turned to Emma and required her to promise that she would not accept the invitation. But Emma said she had done so already. She had written a note which Mr. Howard had charge of; and she was not to be induced to retract. Margaret grew quite angry, accusing her of being mean-spirited and servile, fawning on Miss Osborne, and winning her favor only by her base concessions; she said everything which an irritated and jealous temper could suggest, and tormented Emma into tears at her crossness and ill-will.

"I wonder you mind her, Emma," remonstrated Elizabeth, when she discovered that her sister's eyes were red, and wrung from her an acknowledgment of the cause. Elizabeth had not been present when the discussion which pained Emma so much, had taken place. "It's not the least use fretting about Margaret's ill-temper and

teazing ways—she always was a plague and a torment from a child, and there's no chance of her being any better. She is so abominably selfish. Bat I cannot bear her to make you cry."

"I dare say you think me very foolish," replied Emma, wiping her eyes, "but I have never been used to be crossly spoken to, and it quite upsets me."

"No, I don't think you foolish, Emma; you are only much too good and tender for this situation. I shall be glad when you are married and safe with Mr. Howard, and nobody to scold you or make you spoil your beauty by crying."

"Nonsense, Elizabeth."

"It's not nonsense, Emma, I believe he is very good-natured, and I dare say you will be very happy with him. How long were you *tête-à-tête* with him, before you brought him into the parlour?"

"We came from my father's room then."

"Oh, you need not apologise; I think you were quite right to have a comfortable chat with him, before bringing him into

Margaret's company. It is but little conversation you can have when she is by. I saw you with him in the garden."

Emma blushed.

"I assure you we did not stay there five minutes; he came to call on my father, and we went to him immediately."

Elizabeth only answered by a look; but it was a look which shewed that she was not in the least convinced by Emma's assertions, but only wondered that she should think them necessary.

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